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A PSYCHODYNAMIC ANALYSIS OF GRIEF
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IN THE CONTEXT OF AN

INTERPERSONAL THEORY OF THE SELF

by

David Karl Switzer
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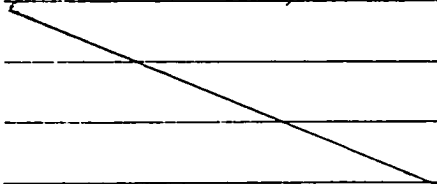
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There is a dearth of literature dealing with the reaction of grief, especially of that which seeks to give the word precise psychological meaning. This work undertakes the task of filling this gap by offering a clearer delineation. Heretofore the word grief has been used to apply to the behavioral reactions of the bereaved person in two ways. First, it has been referred to as if it were a separate emotion with its own unique set of characteristics, but without stating clearly what it is if it is different from other emotions, except for the obvious reference to the external stimulus of death which cues it off. On other occasions it has apparently been used to refer to a combination of several different emotions which are expressed at the particular time of the death of another person. Eliot has stated that "the word grief is used so loosely...that it has little descriptive value."¹

¹Thomas D. Eliot, "The Bereaved Family," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CLX (1932), 185.

Thesis

This work will seek to show that one specific emotion, one which has already been dealt with extensively by investigators, namely anxiety, is the dominant dynamic of the grief reaction, the one without which it would not be grief. Other writers will be seen to have related grief to anxiety, but have not elaborated it in the particular way just stated. The thesis to be presented here is that grief has as its core experience an acute attack of anxiety, precipitated by the external event of the death of a person with whom one is emotionally involved, and that other behavioral responses are dynamically related to the anxiety. Several different approaches to a definition of anxiety will be shown to be involved in the reactions that are noted in the grief situation. To clarify this view, normal grief will be investigated in the light of the relations of the death of an emotionally significant person to the personality structure and dynamics of the bereaved person.

Significant Questions

The major question to be answered is, "What is grief, not descriptively, but dynamically?" Other questions related to this are: "What is the source of the predisposition to respond to the external event of the death of an emotionally related person with the behavioral

patterns which are observed? What are the prior experiences which motivate these responses? Are these experiences and responses described and verbally identified in psychological literature in terms other than grief? What conceptuality and terminology concerning the development and operation of personality seem to be most appropriate in facilitating an understanding of grief?"

Methodology

The method chosen for this study is not experimental in nature. Indeed, a major purpose is to define grief in such a way that a theoretical groundwork is laid for the development of operationally stated hypotheses. Therefore, the approach here will be to examine in detail the material already written on the subject in order to determine what categories are given out of the data already available. The categories selected for use will be those which would seem to this writer to be most fruitful for further investigation. These selected categories will be used as the basis for organization and criticism of all of the material.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

By grief is meant here the response of the individual to the situation in which someone with whom he has had an emotional relationship has died. It should be noted

from the outset that this death is not necessarily of one who is clearly loved, but of one who has had an important emotional meaning for the person who now grieves. This is not to imply that similar or even the same, though usually less intense, emotional reactions cannot take place in other situations involving the loss or threatened loss of things or a status that a person perceives as important to his life. They do. This has been described by Rogers, Oates and Bachmann.²

Technically, the terms bereavement and grief are slightly different, bereavement being the actual state of deprivation or loss, and grief being the response of emotional pain (including, as the use of the word emotional always should, certain physiological accompaniments) to the deprivation. Thus, in grief there must be "at least two factors: (1) an appreciation of the value of that which is lost, and (2) an awareness of the loss itself."³ Recognizing, however, that grief might refer in a literal sense to such a variety of circumstances as the loss of one's

²William F. Rogers, "The Place of Grief Work in Mental Health" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, Boston, 1948), pp.2-5; Wayne Oates, Anxiety in Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 48-51; Charles C. Bachmann, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 22, 71.

³Paul T. Young, Emotions in Man and Animal (New York: Wiley, 1943), p. 324.

job or business, the destruction of one's home through divorce, or other forms of separation from or loss of person or object in which one has considerable emotional investment, it should be understood from the beginning that the word will be used here to refer exclusively to the response by the individual to the deprivation by death of an emotionally significant person, whether this emotional relationship be predominantly positive or negative or large elements of both. Any conclusions concerning other situations of loss may then be generalized from the loss due to death.

III. THE NEGLECT OF GRIEF IN PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Little technical research and writing has been done in regard to grief when one compares this topic with other emotions which offer themselves for psychological investigation. Few attempts have been made to define it in precise operational terms which are productive of experimental research. Several approaches have been made in which there are directions given for more effective ways of working personally with the individual who, at a given moment, is in the midst of the grief reaction, but even these are fewer than one might suppose in the light of the universality of death. Considering this universality and the frequent intensity of grief and its perceived importance

in the lives of persons, its neglect by the mainstream of psychology becomes even more glaring when one remembers that human behavior is designated as the primary datum for this social science.

Yet one has only to review the literature of psychology to discover how seldom grief is even acknowledged as being a human reaction, or, at least, one important enough to be studied. A thorough examination of The Psychological Index of the Psychological Review from the publication of its first volume in 1894 through the 1935 issue, its last year of publication, and of Psychological Abstracts from its first year of publication, 1927, through the current issue, yields only twenty-one listings of articles in English which are investigations of grief. This covers a seventy year span, most of the period of existence of modern psychology. This small number is properly evaluated when one realizes that there are literally hundreds of articles listed in the same two publications which deal with emotion and feelings in general, and with specific reactions of fear, anxiety, rage, anger, joy, happiness, humor, guilt.

Even more startling is that of the articles, only six of them are found in what are usually considered to be the professional psychological journals. Of these six,

two are primarily investigations of weeping⁴, one draws from the field of literature⁵, one is psychoanalytic⁶, one has a sociological orientation⁷, and one is in the area of social psychology⁸. Not one study is conceived of in contemporary psychological terms. The latest of these six articles is 1947. Of the other fifteen articles, twelve are listed in psychiatric and psychoanalytic and three in sociological journals. In regard to doctoral dissertations, Dissertation Abstracts does not list any within the field of academic psychology which investigates grief.

This lack of adequate exploration of the reaction of grief in the professional journals and as a result of graduate research necessarily reflects itself in the neglect of the topic in books in the field of psychology.

⁴Alvin Borgquist, "Crying," American Journal of Psychology, XVII (1906), 149-205; Frederick Lund, "Why Do We Weep?" Journal of Social Psychology, I (1930), 136-51.

⁵Howard Becker, "The Sorrow of Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXVII (1933), 391-410.

⁶Robert F. Creegan, "A Symbolic Action During Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXXVII (1942), 403-05.

⁷Harold Orlansky, "Reactions to the Death of President Roosevelt," Journal of Social Psychology, XXVI (1947), 235-66.

⁸Thomas D. Eliot, "A Step Toward the Social Psychology of Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXVII (1933), 380-90.

No single book by a psychologist was found which seeks to investigate the nature of grief. And even in books dealing with personality theory and dynamics, the psychology of adjustment, and those concerned with the emotions, grief is usually mentioned not at all or else it is referred to only briefly and usually somewhat superficially. The conclusion is reached by this writer that the "science of human behavior" has neglected the almost universal human reaction of grief.

IV. THE CAUSE OF THE NEGLECT OF GRIEF

In Psychology

Why should there be such a serious omission in psychological literature? Undoubtedly a part of the reason is the emphasis within psychology upon the validity of the experimental method and the fact that observations without controlled conditions are viewed with suspicion. Clearly, the grief situation does not lend itself readily to experimental manipulation. The situation is too sensitive to be intruded upon by a methodology which in any way would make the situation more painful. Nor would psychologists presume to seek to "produce" grief "experimentally" as they do fear, anxiety, anger, hostility.

Feifel relates the resistance he encountered when he sought to investigate persons' ideas and feelings concerning their own impending death by interviewing terminal

hospital cases. The resistance, interestingly enough, was not from the patients themselves, but from hospital administrative officers and staff members. He concluded that "death is a taboo subject in the United States, surrounded by disapproval and shame."⁹ If a discipline makes the claim that it studies human behavior, one would expect that it would include all human experiences in its investigations. If it does not, there must be some reason. Psychology has collected very little data about experiences surrounding death. Feifel feels that this reflects the fact that "scientists and professional people are no less immune to prejudice (concerning death) than other groups, not only other disciplines, but psychological colleagues as well."¹⁰ He summarizes the problems surrounding the investigation of death, and this would seem to hold true for using as subjects those who have recently had an emotionally significant person die as well as patients who are confronting their own impending death:

One's own willingness to face or avoid the thought of death can be a relevant variable in the ensuing data. Few undertakings in psychological research, I think, are more emotionally exacting. Pain and death are not themes comfortably encompassed by categories of methodological rigor and theoretical relevance. Not only is the emotional resistance to the investigator... but so also is the potential emotional scotoma of the

⁹Herman Feifel, "Death," Taboo Topics, Norman L. Faberow, ed. (New York: Atherton Press, 1943), p. 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 15.

researcher himself. The investigator is confronted with the Scylla of being affectively swamped, reactivation of his own anxieties about dying, antipathy toward or overidentification with certain kinds of (persons)...and the Charybdis of overintellectualizing his approach, dissembling behind a facade of pseudo-rigorousness, and refusing to observe any but the grossest and least emotionally tinged dimensions of what is happening. Research on human behavior in extreme situations asks for a delicate balance of identification and intellectual detachment (Wallace, 1956).¹¹

Thus an operational definition of grief which grows out of or contributes to the methods and procedures of investigation has not yet been clearly stated. Nor have the mere descriptions of the behavior of grief by themselves been adequate to provide the material for a definition which would lead one to a more thorough understanding of the dynamics at work in the reaction.

In Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis

A somewhat more productive field in its observations and writing on the subject of grief is that of psychiatry and psychoanalysis. (The term psychoanalysis here is used to refer not only to the mainstream of Freudian analysis but also to its numerous contemporary modifications by those who still see themselves as analytic theoreticians and practitioners.)

As was noted above, several of the articles listed

¹¹Ibid., p. 13.. (Feifel's reference was to Wallace, A.C., Human Behavior in Extreme Situations (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1956).)

in the Psychological Index and Psychological Abstracts as being related to grief were in psychiatric or psychoanalytic journals. Even though we cannot detract from the value of the many insights presented in these writings, there seem to be at least two shortcomings. First, most of the articles do not seek to investigate and define grief as such, grief being incidental to other concerns. Second, most of the investigations deal with the pathological expressions of grief. The nature of the work of the psychoanalyst and/or psychiatrist does not bring him into frequent contact with grief in its usual expressions. A majority of cases reported have been those persons already undergoing therapy who, while in this process, also experience bereavement.

In Pastoral Care

Since the person who, in our society, is regularly brought in contact with persons experiencing grief in its normal expressions and whose major function is to operate in the situation to facilitate mourning is the clergyman, it is not surprising that a larger amount of literature dealing with grief comes from this source. Most of it, however, approaches the subject from the specific role of the clergyman as he seeks to function as pastor-counselor in the grief situation. There is relatively little material which attempts to elucidate the precise nature of grief

itself and little attempt to present the topic in a manner useful to further psychological investigation.

V. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Since there exists no thorough examination and evaluation of all available published work dealing with the grief reaction, the next three chapters will seek to summarize the literature dealing with grief from the fields of academic psychology (Chapter II), psychoanalysis and psychiatry (Chapter III), and pastoral care (Chapter IV). Following this, in order to understand the role of anxiety in grief, a concept of personality and the nature of anxiety will be elaborated in terms which are felt to be appropriate to the situation of bereavement. In connection with this, because of the centrality of the figure of Freud, because so many have drawn upon his concepts, and because of the clues he himself gave which point beyond the literal words of his theory to a new direction, a rather thorough chronological study of his theories of anxiety will be made (Chapter V). Continuing to move in the direction seemingly indicated by Freud, a statement concerning the interpersonal nature of the self and an interpretation of anxiety in these terms will be made (Chapter VII). The guilt which is frequently felt and observed as an aspect of grief will be shown to be essentially the same action as the separation anxiety which has

been just defined (Chapter VIII). What is being referred to as existential or ontological anxiety will be shown to be involved in grief, for the fear of one's own death, one's own non-existence will be seen as being stimulated by the death of a significant other (Chapter IX).

It will then remain to draw out some of the implications for the psychologist and for the therapist, both minister and non-minister, of the theory that anxiety is the sine qua non in grief.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is not presumed that this approach will be without flaws nor that its thesis will be without challenge. Neither does it include an experimental investigation. The usefulness of this study will rest upon its ability to give rise to experimentation and/or the insights it presents which expedite therapy with the grief stricken. The method of using categories given by the data of other investigators always involves the limitations of the bias of the one doing the selecting. In addition, there is the danger of circularity once the selection has been made, in that further investigation will tend to be limited by the conceptuality and terminology of these particular categories. Experimentation is always limited by the statement of the hypothesis, and the hypothesis is limited by its theoretical foundation. Nevertheless, the beginning

must be at some point, and theory can always be modified both on logical grounds and on the basis of experimental data. It is hoped that this contribution to dialogue in this area of human distress will provide a theoretical formulation for the necessary experimentation and lead toward the clarification and more adequate handling of these feelings which most of us have experienced and which we shall experience again.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTS OF GRIEF IN ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY

This chapter will seek to review the investigations and literature of the academic discipline of psychology as it has sought to understand grief. There are points at which it has been difficult to distinguish sharply between social psychology and sociology, since both have dealt with some of the same methods and data, especially in regard to the study of families. Although this present work clearly seeks a psychodynamic definition of grief, contributions have been made by a few scholars who have been working in the overlapping area between social psychology and sociology. However, both these and others clearly in the field of psychology are to be distinguished in this chapter from the disciplines of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in their varying forms, or any aspect of medical or psychotherapeutic treatment.

When psychology by this definition has been separated from psychotherapy, it is found to have less to say of a psychodynamic nature in comparison with these other fields.

I. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Before examining the more recent literature, a history of psychology's handling of the topic of grief

will be viewed.

One of the very earliest of the examinations of emotion was made by Charles Darwin in 1872. After having referred to the observation that both excitement and what he termed "deep sorrow," that is, the symptoms of depression, are noted in grief, he sought to define the subjective experience.¹ This was done by pointing out that weeping is frequently related to suffering of the mind. Then, significantly in regard to grief, he indicated that fear is a form of suffering.² The pain of fear seemed to be understood as the core of the grief experience. The futuristic element of anxiety was emphasized: "If we expect to suffer, we are anxious...."³ Darwin has not spelled out precisely what it is we fear in grief, what it is that causes our suffering, but he was essentially accurate in his observation of the elements of grief.

Alexander Bain also emphasized the aspect of pain, relating pain, tears, and grief, although recognizing that tears can also be produced in other ways.⁴ However, he went beyond mere description of the grief reaction and sought to express something of the source of it in the loss

¹Charles Darwin, The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (New York: Appleton, 1899), p. 80.

²Ibid., p. 146. ³Ibid., p. 176.

⁴Alexander Bain, The Emotions and the Will (London: Longmans, Green, 1875), pp. 128-30.

or separation, with the sorrow being in proportion "to the power of the attachment and the pleasure it affords."⁵ It is a disruption of comfort in life. Also included is the element of what we would call identification, or what Allport refers to as self-extension, the investment of our own selfhood in another person or even in an object.⁶ Bain expressed it by relating the subjective experience of pain in sorrow to "our share in the evil that befalls them."⁷ In addition to the elements of sorrow as a response to our own loss of pleasure in the death of a person close to us and our sense of participation in his death as a result of our own inclusion of the deceased within our own self, Bain referred to the additional source of pain caused by what we can only call guilt. He spoke of the regret which brings its sting to mix with the tenderness.⁸

The earliest relevant article in a psychological journal deals with crying as it relates to the situation of grief or sorrow. Alvin Borgquist speaks of crying as not merely the shedding of tears, but a gross reaction of the body. This physiological reaction is a reflection of

⁵Ibid., p. 146.

⁶Gordon W. Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), pp. 283-85.

⁷Bain, op. cit., p. 146.

⁸Ibid., p. 147.

a subjective state described as despair, the desire not to live, "the feeling of being helpless, hopeless, forsaken...."⁹ It seems to the mind of the sufferer as if there can be no help. There is a sense of apprehension and dread, the loss of the will to live, the sense of one's own dying.¹⁰ It is interesting that Borgquist's observations led him to link the death of a significant other with the subjective sense of one's own dying and the dread one feels in the face of his own inability to cope with the threatening situation.

As a result of an analysis of the physiological events of crying and of the data of the psychological states, two distinct elements are noted within the total situation, differing from one another in motivation. The first is what is termed the "call cry," an active seeking for aid, which later lead into the phase of the "hopeless cry," which is a passive breakdown of resistance to the threatening forces, overtly shown as bodily prostration and moves of rejection. The physical movements in both phases represent the psychological reactions of the call for help, passing on into the giving up of the struggle for adjustment to helplessness.¹¹

⁹Alvin Borgquist, "Crying," American Journal of Psychology, XVII (1906), 163.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 165. ¹¹Ibid., p. 199.

Crying has social significance, and therefore, grief contains within both its first reaction and its later development the expression of need for another. The need seems to be for some person who can enter into the experience of the grief stricken person and protect him from the threat of his own extinction, since Borgquist apparently feels that an analysis of the observations warrants the conclusion that the physiological reactions of the grief sufferer while crying resemble those of the act of dying.

Frederick Lund agrees as to the cathartic, tension reducing value of crying, and he, too, bases his study primarily upon the crying at bereavement where there is a "sudden privation or the loss of a prized object," and where the increased tension is apparently "due to intense stimulation without adequate outlet for the liberated energy."¹² It is suggested that the source of the stimulation is the tension of ambivalent emotions.¹³

A rather extensive discussion of sorrow has been presented by Alexander Shand. Although Shand felt that sorrow is a different emotion from that of fear, he did note an unusual affinity of the two and made reference to the conclusion of some writers that "fear (is) essential

¹²Frederick Lund, "Why Do We Weep?" Journal of Social Psychology, I (1930), 145.

¹³Ibid., p. 148.

emotion of melancholia."¹⁴

Primitive sorrow is "caused by some interference with or frustration of a present impulse.... (It is) connected with some event that overpowers us or is irremediable."¹⁵ Thus, the two constant conditions involved in the causation of sorrow are "(1) a present impulse; and (2) the frustration of this impulse...."¹⁶ The prototype instance of this primitive sorrow is the frustration of the young child's hunger drive. In this and in other cases, the degree of sorrow is proportionate to the combined strength of the impulse and the amount of frustration.¹⁷

The sorrow arising out of acquired love is based on a series of laws subsumed under the headings of attraction and restoration. The foundation impulse seems to be that of joy, and the frustration of this impulse is the source of sorrow.¹⁸ The attempt to maintain union with the lost object is stimulated by the sense of frustrated joy, a primary impulse, and the clarity of the person's memory of that joy.¹⁹ The tendencies of attraction and restoration seek by remembering to be reunited with the lost object or

¹⁴Alexander Shand, The Foundations of Character (London: Macmillan, 1914), pp. 308-09.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 311. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 313.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 314. ¹⁸Ibid., pp. 331-32.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 334.

to have the former relationship restored.²⁰ There is a tendency in all joy to restore the state of joy, and the law of restoration in sorrow draws upon this tendency.²¹

Since joy is apparently the source of the value which a person attributes to things, and since sorrow is the response to frustrated joy, it can be seen that the sorrow of love has a destructive influence on values, being antagonistic to the joy of the whole sentiment system.²² It is, therefore, characteristic of the sorrow of love that it destroys the capacity for joy inherent in other sentiments and renders one indifferent to other things about him.²³ The only value which sorrow tends to enhance is the value of the lost object itself.²⁴

Shand has made a number of observations, but he has not pointed to the motivation for the turning inward which causes the indifference to the external world, or for the tendency to enhance the value of the lost object, or for the loss of all value other than that attributed to the object from which one is separated and with which he seeks reunion. Actually, the maintenance of the self in the face of threat would seem to be implied. Simply the loss of a joy would not seem to be sufficient to cause one to lose

²⁰Ibid., pp. 322-23, 326, 333. ²¹Ibid., p. 329.

²²Ibid., p. 357. ²³Ibid., p. 355.

²⁴Ibid., p. 359.

all joy. It is when the source of that joy has been incorporated as part of the self that its loss would lend sufficient strength to the laws of attraction and restoration.

Although certain expressions of sorrow are to be seen as the seeking of help and sympathy, the overall purpose of sorrow is to preserve the constancy of love, to recover the lost union, and, in its resolution, to find new union.²⁵ Its social nature is confirmed by Shand's conclusion that "sorrow tends to be diminished by the knowledge that another sorrows with us," the knowledge that someone else feels with us and is in a state of readiness to help.²⁶ This conclusion is elaborated further by the statement that "sorrow tends to become more painful through being kept secret, (and that it) tends to become less painful through being disclosed," especially to the degree that it evokes the response of sympathetic emotion in the hearer.²⁷

Although Shand saw fit to describe sorrow and fear as two distinct emotions, he did show a relationship between them. The nature of sorrow was stated in terms of a call for help. But then it was noted that one of the varieties of fear is also a cry for assistance.²⁸ Therefore, although in the major discussion of sorrow, it is given a separate place among the primary emotions, the way it is

²⁵Ibid., p. 366. ²⁶Ibid., p. 342.

²⁷Ibid., p. 343. ²⁸Ibid., p. 317.

actually defined can be interpreted as one expression of anxiety, the avoidance of frustration or pain.

Leonard Troland has defined sorrow as "an affective state, resulting from the removal of an accustomed stimulus which strongly conditions one or more positive retroflex mechanisms."²⁹

In close relationship with another person, a vast and powerful system of responses has been built up through the action of the positive retroflexes which this person conditions. The death of the loved object directs attention to the idea of this object, but the responses can no longer occur. They must be inhibited.... Hence, the strong negative affinity.³⁰

One develops a certain pattern of behavior built around successive and meaningful interaction with another person. This pattern is learned according to conditioning principles. When the other dies, the bereaved person's attention is forced upon the deceased by the series of events, thus serving as a constant stimulus to respond according to the previously conditioned pattern. In the actual absence of the other, however, these responses cannot be carried through. Therefore, the result is that of frustrated impulses and of behavior which seeks to reduce the tension set up. In this form of description, Troland has done no more than express what takes place in any

²⁹Leonard T. Troland, The Fundamentals of Human Motivation (New York: Van Nostrand, 1928), p. 448.

³⁰Ibid.

situation of frustrated impulses or inhibited responses, and does not account for the intensity of the reaction of grief.

One of the early American psychologists of note was William McDougall. He felt that sorrow cannot be viewed as an emotion in and of itself, since it "presupposes the existence of an organized sentiment (i.e. love)...."³¹ It should be understood as a painful qualification of this sentiment, resulting from the frustrating of its impulse.³² McDougall's reasoning seems to be that sorrow is an inner condition comprised of both tender-emotion and negative self-feeling, forming such a unique subjective experience that the tendency has been to give it a name of its own. His perceptiveness in seeing the complexity of a person's emotional life is helpful, and he reflects an element of the concept of self-loss. For when there has been the loss of a loved one through death,

few can avoid some negative self-feeling under such conditions, for a part of the larger self has been torn away, and some thought of some effort which might have been made but was not is very apt to increase the intensity of this painful negative self-feeling.³³

This negative self-feeling, as he terms it, might well be called guilt today. The tearing away of "a part of the larger self" is the type of painful experience which is in contradiction to the maintenance of self-integrity.

³¹William McDougall, An Introduction to Social Psychology (22nd ed., enl.) (London: Methuen, 1931), p. 69.

³²Ibid. ³³Ibid., pp. 130-31.

Threat to self-integrity is designated by the term anxiety. Even though McDougall does not use these terms, he has described the conditions.

McDougall apparently does not deny that what is termed sorrow is an affective state. He does suggest that it is not a distinct and separate emotion in and of itself, but is simply a convenient term used to designate certain combinations of other emotions cued off by a particular event, namely the loss of an emotionally significant person.

II. CONTEMPORARY ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY

A thorough analysis of the behavioral aspects of grief is that of Paul T. Young. Grief is a recognizable emotion both subjectively and by an observer. It is cued off by the loss of a "person or object or opportunity" which one values, and reflects a mixed emotional state.³⁴ It involves the loss of significant interpersonal relationship and/or the source of personal satisfactions of several types.³⁵ It is to be thought of as "a persistent state of non-adjustment," with the grief being over when the adjustment is made to the changed circumstances.³⁶ Thus, "the

³⁴Paul T. Young, Emotions in Man and Animal (New York: Wiley, 1943), p. 324.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 377-78. ³⁶Ibid., pp. 324-25.

term grief is employed to designate: (1) the emotional process, and (2) the persistent state of non-adjustment."³⁷

Young has described the overt behavioral responses in a situation of loss, linked the loss with that of a recognized value, labeled it a disruptive, disturbed state of the organism, a state of non-adjustment, and said that it was a complex emotion. Yet none of this has pointed to the source and nature of the dynamic character of grief.

James C. Coleman points out that grief is "based on a close identification with the person or thing that has been lost; in a sense, the bereaved feels that part of himself is gone."³⁸ However, Coleman does not go into detail as to how the identification comes about nor does he designate the emotional response to self-loss in a precise manner. He might well have linked this concept of the dynamics of grief with his earlier definition of the anxious person as being "apprehensive of impending disaster."³⁹ He does add that grief is complicated by feelings of hostility, guilt, and dependence and that the freedom to express these feelings and the support of other persons facilitate readjustment.⁴⁰

³⁷Ibid., p. 356.

³⁸James C. Coleman, Personality Dynamics and Effective Behavior (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1960), p. 336.

³⁹Ibid., p. 333. ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 337.

III. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

A name which stands out among the early investigators of grief from a social orientation and who has sustained his interest and writing over a period of time is that of Thomas D. Eliot. As early as 1930, he published an appeal for an empirical study of grief, recommending a sociological appraisal of society's help to the bereaved and one which would deal "with personal attitudes and success or failure in readjusting the conditioned responses of the interacting survivors."⁴¹ He followed this in 1933 with a reference to the neglect of the reality of death in psychological literature and called for as much investigation and open discussion of the mental hygiene of grief as there had been in regard to sex.⁴² The major part of the article is an outline to be used for case studies of reactions to bereavement.

In his own direct study of bereaved families, Eliot has described bereavement as a family crisis, with immediate effects including the rejection of reality, a sense of unreality, detached calm, shock, exaltation, self-injury,

⁴¹Thomas D. Eliot, "The Adjustive Behavior of Bereaved Families," Social Forces, VIII (1930), 546.

⁴²Thomas D. Eliot, "A Step Toward the Social Psychology of Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXVII (1933), 380.

repression, the blaming of self or others, and a sense of longing.⁴³ Secondary reactions are listed as escape or the attempt to do so, defense and repression, compensation and rationalization, masochism and exhibitionism, identification with the deceased, transference and substitution.⁴⁴ If one did not know that the topic under discussion were grief, he might well be inclined to say that this was a list of a number of ego defense mechanisms in response to intense anxiety.

A number of significant family responses to bereavement were noted, involving a disturbance of the family configuration and shifting of roles in the attempt to form a new and workable pattern. The conflict and anxiety caused by this new interaction led both to increase of familial affectional ties and to a breakdown in family solidarity, depending upon prior family relationships and learned tendencies to respond to crises.⁴⁵

In an approach to a definition of grief, Eliot states:

Psychologically, bereavement is a major type in the general class of traumatic frustration-situations. Arrested impulse or thwarted habit is at the root of all sorrow. Bereavement is one's own blocked wish for

⁴³Thomas D. Eliot, "The Bereaved Family," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CLX (1932), 185.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 186. ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 188.

response following death of the loved object. The loved one is gone, but the associated memories and habits and needs remain alive as a real complex in the mind of the bereaved.⁴⁶

Even though the term "loved one" is used, it is recognized that within the interaction of two or more people the emotional pattern is not a simple one, nor all positive.

One must recognize that in thousands of "normal" families, affection is mixed with indifference or with other less attractive sentiments which are ignored in our cultural stereotypes of family life.⁴⁷

Hostility, guilt, relief are a part of the total situation, and even the death of someone with whom one had been quarrelling can cause an emotional reaction which must be considered as a part of bereavement.⁴⁸ In the light of this, it seems strange that Eliot should say: "Intensity of sorrow tends to vary directly as intensity of prior love and joy."⁴⁹ He modifies the terminology somewhat when he indicates that where persons have become dependent upon one another, grief will be "intensified by the sense of emptiness, helplessness, or fear."⁵⁰ Dependence, however, is not identical with love, and although persons who love one

⁴⁶Thomas D. Eliot, "Bereavement: Inevitable but Not Insurmountable," Family, Marriage, and Parenthood, Howard Becker and Reuben Hill, eds. (Boston: Heath, 1948), p. 643.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 661. ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 662

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 644. ⁵⁰Ibid.

another are usually dependent upon one another, the emotional involvement may also have strong elements of, indeed, may even be dominated by, negative emotions.

Extreme self-centeredness is a predominant characteristic of the bereavement reaction. This is not said in a condemnatory way or to imply that the grief sufferer is normally a selfish person. It is simply a normal reaction under the circumstances, and

is understandable as a self-defense of the personality against a mortal attack on its inner integrity, a conflict within one's central citadel of values and of control.⁵¹

Another characteristic response of the person undergoing grief is the experience of the loss of meaning in much that previously had seemed important. There is the sense of "emptiness, deadness, futility."⁵² This may even encompass one's own life, the loss of the sense of value of one's self and the impression that one's life is not worth sustaining.⁵³

The work of mourning is described by saying that each unit of affectionate attachment to the deceased, upon being revived in memory and grief, is diffused and reattached, or at least loosened ready for transference to new objects.⁵⁴

This cannot be the whole of the process, however, as Eliot seems to assume in other places. Not only must

⁵¹Ibid., p. 652. ⁵²Ibid., p. 653.

⁵³Ibid., p. 654. ⁵⁴Ibid.

emotional ties be broken and the affection be reinvested, but repressed guilt and hostility must be brought into the open and worked out.⁵⁵ In addition, paradoxical though it may sound, while affectional ties are being broken, efforts to perpetuate the love-object in some fashion and the search for new objects of affection are taking place.⁵⁶

Since grief is intensely self-centered and introverted, any attachments or attractions to other persons, or almost any kind of group demands upon the bereaved... may serve a therapeutic purpose in detaching the fixations from the deceased and freeing the energies of the bereaved from self-absorption.⁵⁷

Becker has subsumed the responses to the loss of a loved object under the categories of depressed and excited, suggesting that the emotion of anger may frequently be linked with the latter, especially where the behavior involves aggressive behavior toward others.⁵⁸ Not only is it possible for anger to be involved, but it is indicated that there is the possibility of sorrow even without love.⁵⁹

An important description and classification of the responses to bereavement resulted from an investigation made by David Fulcomer. Its purpose was to answer the two questions:

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 647, 655. ⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 649, 665.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 663-64.

⁵⁸Howard Becker, "The Sorrow of Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXVII (1933), 395-96.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 398.

1. What types of responses do bereaved spouses make to bereavement, both immediately and also during the first six weeks following bereavement?

2. What if any common sequences of behavior are observable in these responses?⁶⁰

An analysis of observations and interviews and material from daily journals of seventy-two subjects revealed four basic stages of adjustment to bereavement with several categories of adjustment identifiable at each stage.

The Immediate Stage, up to several hours following the death included the Stoic, Dazed, Collapse and Lacrimose responses. The Post-Immediate Stage, to the end of the funeral, included the Acquiescent, Excited, Protestive, Detached, and Despondent responses. Categories of Alternating, Enforced, and Attention-Getting described the behavior in the Transitional Stage, from the funeral to reentry into active life. The final stage was that of the Repatterning of behavior, categorized as Projective, Participative, Identification, Memory-Phantasy, and Repressive-Seclusive.⁶¹

Harold Orlansky points to anxiety as being the significant emotion as one confronts death and he emphasizes the role of talking as a means of dealing with it.

⁶⁰David M. Fulcomer, "The Adjustive Behavior of Some Recently Bereaved Spouses: A Psycho-Sociological Study (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., 1942), p. 20.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 75-159.

Both rationally and empirically death is the ultimate deprivation, the final reduction of personality; we believe the evidence proves it, is also recognized as such, emotionally, by the ego.⁶²

This emotional recognition of the threat of death, the threat to the life of one's own personality that this present work calls anxiety, Orlansky seems to understand in a similar manner. The prevalence of talking by the grief stricken person is "the wish to relieve anxiety."⁶³ Hyperactivity arises from the same motivation, but talking seems to be an effective way of tension reduction because of its social meaning.

Silence...serves to separate the individual from society and makes his loneliness more complete. It is in this connection that the function of talk as a social bond and an affirmation of life, relieving the anxieties associated with silence and produced ultimately by the fear of death, becomes apparent.⁶⁴

Orlansky has provided clues which are to be followed up in detail in regard to the relation of language and personality structure and dynamics, the anxiety of grief, and the meaning of interpersonal relationship to the grief sufferer.

Henry Brewster points to the healing power to the person of personal relationships, when, after he has defined grief as the reaction "to the cessation of a human

⁶²Harold Orlansky, "Reactions to the Death of President Roosevelt," Journal of Social Psychology, XXVI (1947), 233.

⁶³Ibid., p. 254. ⁶⁴Ibid., p. 253.

relationship which cannot be duplicated," he goes on to indicate that its destructive severity is ameliorated when "the interaction with the person lost is replaced by a satisfying interaction with new individuals."⁶⁵ In order to accomplish this, dependency ties with the deceased must be broken, but this is not easily done when the dependency in the relationship has been excessive. In such cases there is a morbid reaction, a longer and deeper state of emotional preoccupation and a greater impairment of mental functioning.⁶⁶

A case of morbid grief reaction by a girl is cited by Brewster. When her brother died, she sought to deal with the affect through the means of identification (development of shortness of breath and feeling of suffocation, reproducing symptoms of the brother's illness), repression (of her hostility toward him), and denial (of the reality of his death).⁶⁷

Willard Waller has observed that the effect of bereavement

varies with the age of the bereaved, his emotional involvement with the deceased, the manner of the death, the other relationships of the bereaved, and the degree of emancipation of the bereaved person.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Henry B. Brewster, "Grief: A Disrupted Human Relationship," Human Organization, IX (1950), 19.

⁶⁶Ibid. ⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁶⁸Willard Waller and Reuben Hill, The Family: A Dynamic Interpretation (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), p. 471.

From this it should be clear that there would be cultural differences in intensity of feeling because of differing patterns of emotional involvement between specified people, the degree of dependence, interdependence, or independence. "One of the prices we (in middle-class America) pay for intimate response in families is painful adjustment to separation...."⁶⁹ But the response is not the same for all.

Nevertheless, when there is the loss of a person to whom an individual is closely attached, there are certain behavioral responses. The event involves frustrated wishes and needs and desire, and there are a number of adjustments to make before these can be once more fulfilled. There arises within the bereaved the conflict between conscious knowledge of reality and the unconscious, emotionally charged wish system. This is "the central conflict of bereavement."⁷⁰ The painful feeling of the "annihilating sense of loss" in which this conflict is central is apparently determinative of the responses of numbness, a sense of unreality, and the blocking and distortion of memory, mechanisms whose purpose is to protect the self.⁷¹

The dynamics of mourning are examined in more detail. The complexity of interpersonal relationships defy an

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 473. ⁷⁰Ibid., p. 478.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 478.

attempt at generalized summary and classification. Varying degrees of love and hate and degrees of dependence and independence based upon these emotions will produce varying responses.⁷² These emotional bonds connecting persons express themselves through habit patterns with great emotional power. When one of the persons dies, these habits and their striving for expression do not automatically cease. Rather they continue to push toward activity, much of which is now impossible. The result is an accumulation of emotion which cannot be fully drained off, but which move toward expression through mental processes such as imagination, fantasy, and bereavement dreams.⁷³ When some of these emotions are strongly negative (hate, hostility), lacking overt channels of expression, there is the tendency for them to be directed toward the self in a destructive manner. Thus, self-reproach becomes a part of the picture of extreme grief, and to some degree a part of all bereavement because of the existence of at least some ambivalence in every relationship.⁷⁴

One aspect of grief which calls for attention is that the death of a person close to one "is a reminder that one must die, and for a long time the bereaved person appears to be acutely conscious of his own mortality."⁷⁵

⁷²Ibid., p. 484. ⁷³Ibid., pp. 480-81.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 483-84. ⁷⁵Ibid., p. 486.

An interpretation of grief which is similar to the conceptuality of this present study is that of Volkart and Michael. The interactional nature of the event is stated in their definition of bereavement:

Bereavement is usually understood to indicate the emotional state, behavior, and conduct of the survivors immediately following the experience of separation by death from a person who fulfilled dependency needs, especially needs of emotional interaction.⁷⁶

In order to explain the dynamics of grief, Volkart and Michael point out that "there are social and cultural as well as psychological dimensions of the event."⁷⁷ These are learned, yet they play a significant role in defining the meaning of the event and thus in lessening or intensifying the force of the distress.⁷⁸

The cultural becomes personal as the individual self develops in interaction with members of the family. The self is actually "a social self, including the 'reflected appraisals of others,' such roles as have been internalized...."⁷⁹ The particular social structure affects

the number and kinds of identifications the self will make, the degree of dependency on others, and the general mode and strength of affectional ties.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Edmund H. Volkart and Stanley T. Michael, "Bereavement and Mental Health," Explorations in Social Psychiatry, Alexander Leighton, et al., eds. (New York: Basic Books, 1957), pp. 282-83.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 285. ⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 285-86.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 287. ⁸⁰Ibid., p. 292.

Different patterns of family life produce variable emotional levels of self-involvement with other persons, and this is a major factor in the behavioral reactions of bereavement. For example, where a person grows up in a tribe where the life of the tribe is the highest value and where emotional ties are diffused among many persons rather than a few, the individual is less vulnerable to intense feeling of loss at the death of another individual. On the other hand, in our culture with the small family, small house, central role of the mother, much emotional investment in members of the family, maximal opportunity for the development of ambivalence through intense gratification and frustration in the family context, there is the breeding of overidentification and overdependency and the cultural definition of certain persons as irreplaceable. The death of a person then is a loss to the other members of the family, and is reinforced by the fact that it is defined by society as a loss. The need at the time of death is for the bereaved person both to replace the loss and to deal with his feelings of hostility and guilt.⁸¹ With marriage and children, some of the primary attachments are dispersed through the lessening of interaction and normally of dependence, but new attachments and identifications are made with the tendency of their being of the same emotional

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 293-94.

order as the old.⁸²

Complicating the behavioral responses to grief are the emotions surrounding role expectancy. The bereaved person has a social role to perform. So problems may arise not just because of the loss, "but by an awareness of one's inability to play the bereaved role properly."⁸³ Certain roles, of course, have been internalized by a person. But experiences in the relationship may have tended to contradict the role, and emotions inappropriate to it develop. Because of social fear, many people sustain a relationship which does not seem on the surface to deviate too much from social expectation, but within which negative emotions must be repressed and guilt over the known failure to perform one's role adequately is increased. In bereavement, society says to feel the loss and express the sadness. But this is not always congruent with one's self-feelings, and our society has not provided for sanctioned channels of expression for hostility and guilt in the context of bereavement, at which time the accumulation of unexpressed emotion reaches its climax.⁸⁴

Therefore it is not, as some earlier writers have indicated, that the intensity of grief is directly proportionate to the amount of love and joy which have existed

⁸²Ibid., p. 295. ⁸³Ibid., p. 297.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 297-98.

in the relationship. Rather, a high initial vulnerability to the problems of bereavement is produced when the emotions of the bereaved person (sense of loss, hostility, guilt) are maximal and complex.⁸⁵ Problems are avoided and intensity of emotional reaction is reduced "when there is approximate congruence between the self and the social role of the bereaved."⁸⁶

IV. SUMMARY

Early writers in the field of psychology recognized and sought to deal with grief. Tending to lack something of the precision of a well developed methodology and vocabulary, a number of them nevertheless were keen observers and men of insight. Some of the relevant contributions were the following:

Grief is an affective state, mental suffering which is the result of the death of a person to whom one had been emotionally attached, the intensity of the feeling being related to the strength of the attachment. The result is the frustration of learned habit patterns involving the deceased. Part of the mourning behavior plays the role of reducing the tension of unfulfilled tendencies to act and increased emotion. Fear is also a form of mental suffering, and it was shown that grief could be linked with anxiety

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 299. ⁸⁶Ibid., p. 302.

conceptually, but this was not clearly and consciously done by any of the writers. There is no single emotion operating alone, since in addition to love and the memory of former joy there can also be negative feelings which complicate mourning. Some responses are similar to those of depression: despair, loss of desire to live, lack of hope, loneliness. There was a hint of the concept of the experience of losing part of one's self. Acts of mourning have a social significance; they are a call for relationship in the midst of the attempt to maintain union with the lost object, to restore the relationship. A necessary task is to enter into new relationship.

Contemporary academic psychology has almost entirely ignored the human reaction of grief. The only new idea presented is the dynamic concept of the identification of the bereaved with the deceased, and this being the source of the feeling of the loss of part of one's self.

From social psychology and sociology there has come a greater quantity of writing which incorporates more psychodynamic concepts. The definition of grief includes concepts of deprivation, cessation of human relationships, separation, the wish for security. Negative emotions and overdependency are portrayed in complex interaction with love, and it is seen that hostility toward the deceased can be redirected toward the self and is a factor in mourning. The death of another is seen as an attack on the

integrity of the self; there is a sense of self-loss, a threat against which many types of defensive mechanisms are employed. This concept is founded on the development of the self out of interaction and identification with others within a culturally defined familial system which produces the degree of dependence and ambivalence with a limited number of people. The death of another is a reminder that we, too, must die, and one reaction is a loss of meaning. Earlier learned methods of coping with stress and the learned cultural norms and practices are major influences on mourning, which is often complicated by role expectancy. Mourning includes talking as a means of relieving tension and of social binding, the latter being a therapeutic necessity. The relief of tension is expedited by the bringing out of the unconscious repressed guilt and hostility.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTS OF GRIEF IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PSYCHIATRY

The field of psychotherapy as a whole, and within it particularly psychoanalysis, has from time to time turned its attention to the dynamics of grief and mourning. Although for the most part it deals with abnormal expressions or the relationship of mourning to abnormal conditions, many insights are made available from this field. The term psychoanalysis as here used is not confined to Freudian analysis alone.

Also included in this chapter are contributions to an understanding of grief from investigators in the field of psychiatry who are either non-psychoanalytic in their method or whose particular writings on grief are not directly dependent upon a clear psychoanalytic interpretation.

I. PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATIONS

It would seem that psychoanalytically oriented investigators could be logically grouped according to those who include some reference to the relationship between anxiety and grief but who make a distinction between the two affective responses, those who identify the two, and those who make a contribution to an understanding of grief without direct reference to anxiety.

Grief and Anxiety Related but Not Identified

Any discussion of the psychoanalytic interpretation of grief properly begins with Sigmund Freud himself. To him, "mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one...."¹ Although he used the term "loved person," it should not be assumed that there is some pure relationship uncontaminated by other emotions. In spite of the fact that a person may be loved, there are usually elements of aggression and hate.

With the exception of only a very few situations, there adheres to the tenderest and most intimate of our love-relations a small portion of hostility which can excite an unconscious death wish.²

This ambivalence, as we shall see, is normal within limits, but when the conflict is intense the mourning can become pathological. Mourning, although a drastic disruption of one's ordinary pattern of living, is such a universal response that it never occurs to us to consider it as being abnormal, since it also is usually a transient state, dissipating itself over a period of time.³

Even though the reaction of grief is regarded as normal, it has as its distinguishing characteristics some of the same features as the pathological condition of

¹Sigmund Freud, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works (New York: Macmillan, 1961), XIV, 243.

²Ibid., XIV, 298. ³Ibid., XIV, 243-44.

melancholia: a painful frame of mind and the loss of interest in the outside world and one's usual activities. One's whole attention is given to one's response to the situation of the loss of the loved object. This is made necessary by the fact that the libido directed toward the lost object now has to be withdrawn and directed toward another object.⁴ This arouses a natural resistance, since the lost object has in a way become a component of our own ego.⁵ Thus, "the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged," and it is necessary for all of the aspects of the object to which libido has been bound to become liberated.⁶ This takes place bit by bit over a period of time; mourning is completed when this liberation of libido from the lost object has been accomplished and the ego is free again.⁷

Freud sought to distinguish between normal mourning and the pathological state of melancholia by pointing out that in the former one knows what he has lost, while the latter "is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness...."⁸ It is true that in mourning there is the external event of death, real loss, to point to, and that one usually is not able to see so readily the occasion for the reaction of melancholia.

⁴Ibid., XIV, 244. ⁵Ibid., XIV, 298.

⁶Ibid., XIV, 245. ⁷Ibid., XIV. ⁸Ibid., XIV.

However, such an absolute distinction overlooks two factors. First, there certainly are pathological states of depression which are situational in nature as far as their onset is concerned, such as the neurotic depressive reaction and the psychotic depressive reaction.⁹ To be sure, the external situation does not seem to contain within it factors which would ordinarily produce such intensity and duration of reaction, so it is assumed that significant and powerful unconscious elements are involved. But there is observable object loss. Coleman has clearly said,

Most persons suffering from reactive depressions can describe the traumatic situation which led to their depression although they may not be able to explain their overreaction to the situation.¹⁰

The unconscious factors are usually those of repressed hostility toward loved ones and resulting feelings of guilt. The latter are dramatically intensified on an occasion such as the death of the person against whom the hostility is directed.¹¹

Second, Freud seems to be inconsistent when he says "there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious."¹² He has as much as indicated unconscious elements himself,

⁹James C. Coleman, Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life (3rd ed., Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1964), pp. 227, 229-30, 341.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 229-30. ¹¹Ibid., p. 229.

¹²Freud, op. cit., XIV, 245. (Emphasis mine.)

for the external situation alone does not account for the reaction of mourning in which internal, unconscious processes are at work. He himself has noted the presence of ambivalence in mourning. It would seem that the differentiation would be simply a matter of the degree to which morbid unconscious processes involved, and not whether they were or were not.

Another distinction which Freud made between mourning and melancholia was that in the former "the world...has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself."¹³ This leads to a lowering of self-regard in melancholia which mourning lacks. Again it should be suggested that observation of a number of people experiencing the grief reaction would note the existence of lowered self-esteem, and that the emptiness in the external world is felt because there is an emptiness in the ego.

Certainly Freud is correct in describing the difference between mourning and melancholia, but it is primarily a difference of degree rather than kind. The very dynamics which he describes as being involved in the origin of the pathological state are also to be found in "normal" grief, only in less degree and in a person with a stronger ego. The transformation of the object-loss into ego-loss takes place in normal cases as well as morbid

¹³Ibid., XIV, 246.

ones, for there has always been at least a certain amount of the identification on the part of the ego with the libidinal object, even though he discussed this only in regard to melancholia.¹⁴

He goes on to point out what should be taken to be the significant difference between the two reactions: the degree to which the identification is narcissistic in nature, with the identification actually being a substitute for object-love.¹⁵ It is this high degree of narcissism which is absent in normal grief; in this Freud was correct.¹⁶ However, there is always some degree of identification and therefore a sense of ego-loss in the case of any loss of libidinal object.

Concerning the role of ambivalence, the "loss of a love-object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself effective and come into the open."¹⁷ The observation is made that

in melancholia the relation to the object is no simple thing; it is complicated by ambivalence.... Therefore, the exciting causes of melancholia have a much wider range than those of mourning....¹⁸

Granted, but the point made here in addition is that in mourning the relation to the object is usually no simple

¹⁴Ibid., XIV, 249. ¹⁵Ibid., XIV.

¹⁶Ibid., XIV, 250, 258. ¹⁷Ibid., XIV, 250-51.

¹⁸Ibid., XIV, 256.

thing either. Since some degree of ambivalence is present in all relationships it should not be surprising that beyond minimal limits of hostility and yet short of extreme repressed hostility there should be a "pathological cast to the mourning,"¹⁹ but without the mourning itself being considered pathological, or melancholia.

The resolution of the process of mourning comes about in the following manner:

Each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrate the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished.²⁰

However, Freud admitted his inability to explain why the detachment of the libido from its object should be so painful, why it is that the distinguishing conscious characteristic of mourning should be mental anguish.²¹

Later Freud discussed mourning from the point of view of its relation to anxiety, asking the question of when object-loss leads to one and when to the other. Reference is made back to the infant's reaction of anxiety and apparent psychic pain when separated from its mother. It has not reached the point of learning to differentiate

¹⁹Ibid., XIV, 251. (Emphasis mine.)

²⁰Ibid., XIV, 255. ²¹Ibid., XIV, 245, 306.

"between temporary absence and permanent loss."²² The reaction of anxiety is learned in this "loss of the perception of the object (which is equated with the loss of the object itself)."²³ So far this is not interpreted as loss of love. The infant is not yet capable of making that interpretation. Later loss of love becomes linked with danger and thus a determinant of anxiety.

The reaction of pain is referable to actual loss of object, while anxiety is the response to the danger of the loss.²⁴ The cathexis of longing for a lost object is compared to the condition of the organism when there is physical pain.²⁵ A highly cathected libidinal object "plays the role as a part of the body which is cathected by an increase of stimulus."²⁶ Both situations produce a state of mental helplessness. The reaction is the same when the loss is due to mourning, which also involves the necessity of separating libido from the lost object. The pain in doing this derives from the affect of painful longing in the mental "reproduction of the situations in which (the person) must undo the ties that bind him to it."²⁷

Even predating Freud's first references to grief was a statement by Karl Abraham in which he made what

²²Ibid., XX, 169. ²³Ibid., XX, 170.

²⁴Ibid., XX. ²⁵Ibid., XX. ²⁶Ibid., XX, 171.

²⁷Ibid., XX, 172.

seems to this writer to be the same mistake of Freud in overlooking the unconscious and at least to some degree morbid elements in so-called "normal grief: "...we can distinguish between the affect of sadness or grief and neurotic depression, the latter being unconsciously motivated and a consequence of repression."²⁸ This view has already been criticized in relation to Freud.

Although Abraham's concepts were based upon a theory of anxiety which was later to be superceded, his description of the depressive reaction is accurate:

A neurotic will be attacked with anxiety when his instinct strives for a gratification which repression prevents him from attaining; depression sets in when he has to give up his sexual aim without having attained gratification. He feels himself unloved and incapable of loving, and he therefore despairs of his life and his future.²⁹

The despairing of one's life and future, however, is quite descriptive of the person experiencing intense grief as well as the neurotic depressive.

Later, Abraham elaborated in some detail the role of ambivalence and introjection in mourning. His point of departure was Freud's assumption that an ambivalent conflict was inherent in melancholia, and since the bereaved person seeks to introject the lost love-object, in order

²⁸Karl Abraham, Selected Papers of Karl Abraham (New York: Basic Books, 1953), p. 137.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 137-38

to try to maintain it, the unconscious hostility toward the object is experienced as hostility toward one's self.³⁰ Abraham carries this insight over into normal mourning, where "the person reacts to a real object-loss by effecting a temporary introjection of the loved person."³¹

This process calls the dead back to life by setting it up within one's own ego. Without the love object, life has no more attraction, but establishing the lost object in one's ego serves the purpose of making life meaningful again.³² The process of mourning produces the psychological result: "My loved object is not gone, for I now carry it within myself and can never lose it."³³ Abraham has gone beyond Freud when he declares that

introjection occurs in mourning in the healthy person... no less than in the melancholic.... ...Its main purpose is to preserve the person's relations to the dead object, or...to compensate for his loss.³⁴

Abraham seems to be saying that the distinction between mourning and melancholia, grief and a neurotic depressive reaction is primarily a matter of degree. In either instance, whatever the cause of the object loss or threatened object loss, the mechanism of introjection is triggered. To the degree that there is hostility toward the

³⁰Ibid., p. 419. ³¹Ibid., p. 435.

³²Ibid., p. 436. ³³Ibid., p. 437.

³⁴Ibid., p. 438.

love-object, then hostility is directed inward toward the internalized object, this being experienced as depression. Where the relationship has not had deeply morbid elements, then it becomes possible, according to Abraham, for the feelings of affection easily to shove aside the hostile ones, and thus dispel the feelings of depression.³⁵ This is what takes place in normal grief.

Abraham has also shown how a predisposition toward a later severe grief reaction can be established through a series of early object losses, successive disappointments in love by the infant and young child.³⁶

Helene Deutsch has pointed out the extreme variation of reaction in the situation of bereavement. If grief is excessive or delayed, it is an indication not only that the amount of ambivalence overshadows the positive force of the ties, but also that guilt might be involved to a higher degree than expected.

Psychoanalytic observation of neurotic patients frequently reveals a state of severe anxiety replacing the normal process of mourning. This is interpreted as a regressive process and constitutes another variation of the normal course of mourning.³⁷

This would follow, since the neurotic is already a person with a high level of anxiety. The loss of an

³⁵Ibid., p. 442. ³⁶Ibid., p. 458

³⁷Helene Deutsch, "Absence of Grief," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, VI (1937), 13. (Emphasis mine.)

emotionally significant person, being a reproduction of the original anxiety producing situation, separation from the mother, would simply increase his anxiety to a level where the neurotic mechanisms were no longer adequate and an acute attack of anxiety would result.

Grief is seen by Deutsch as threatening the integrity of the ego, and the response is either regression to infantile anxiety or the mobilization of defenses to protect the person from anxiety. One mechanism "is the omission of affect."³⁸

In seeking to explore those situations in which a person does not show the usual overt manifestations of grief at the time of bereavement, Deutsch validly demonstrates her assumption that the affect of "unmanifested grief will be found expressed to the full in one way or another."³⁹ This is true since all affect has a "striving for realization."⁴⁰ Therefore, for adequate functioning, "the process of mourning as reaction to the real loss of a loved person must be carried to completion."⁴¹ If one fails to do so, the "flight from the suffering of grief is but a temporary gain, because...the necessity to mourn persists in the psychic apparatus."⁴² There it will continue

³⁸Ibid., p. 16. ³⁹Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 20. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 21.

⁴²Ibid., p. 22.

to seek expression, and, in fact, will find expression in substitute forms, frequently in the form of "unmotivated depressions."⁴³

Charles Anderson has made his contributions to a psychoanalytic understanding of grief in the context of his thesis that some people develop neurotic and even psychotic symptoms because of morbid grief that has not been abreacted. The hypothesis, based on Deutsch's conceptual framework, is that anxiety states can point beyond themselves to a

state of internal disintegration and disharmony of which anxiety was the signal and a warning that the existence of the ego was threatened by what it has incorporated into itself.... The ego was threatened by and threatened the very objects for which it mourned.⁴⁴

The mourner feels that he can never restore what has been lost; an object of value is permanently gone, and since there is an element of identification with the valued object, one's own self is perceived as threatened.

On occasions this signal of anxiety breaks through in overt anxiety states. On occasions it is dealt with by killing part of one's own organism symbolically in some form of hysterical reaction in order to save the whole

⁴³Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁴Charles Anderson, "Aspects of Pathological Grief and Mourning," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXX (1949), 49-50.

organism from self-destruction.⁴⁵ Other pathological forms can arise, such as depression or hypomania, both of which are frequently seen as temporary reactions in normal grief, hypomania being the denial of depression and the reality of what has happened.⁴⁶

Thus,

certain neurotic responses are attempts to deal with and cure profound states of depression; in this sense there is a repetition of an earlier pattern where the successful or unsuccessful working through of an anxiety state is the manifestation of the manner in which the infant has dealt with its primary loss.⁴⁷

The most extensive attempt to clarify the grief reaction by reference to psychoanalytic concepts is that of Jack Spiro.

Each of the two instincts, sex and aggression, gives rise to intrapsychic conflicts, and these form the two sources of the response of grief when a loved one dies.

The energy of the sexual instinct, which is first directed inward in the narcissistic phase of infancy, is normally redirected outward toward a loved object, originally the mother, and later others. This energy of the id constantly seeks expression, and it is the function of the ego to direct the time and form of expression. Under normal circumstances the ego is capable of performing this

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 50. ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 55.

function in accordance with the demands of external reality while allowing the id its gratification. However,

in bereavement, the libidinal energy of the Id which was directed towards the loved object is suddenly interrupted by death. But this great amount of energy continues to seek satisfaction although the object of this satisfaction no longer exists. The death of a loved object destroys the equilibrium that the Ego has tried to establish between the Id and itself. The Ego then finds it difficult and painful, if not impossible to cope with the libidinal energy that seeks discharge.⁴⁸

The ego becomes overwhelmed; it feels weakened and helpless and in danger. The awareness of this danger is anxiety, and anxiety is aroused at the death of a love-object, because the intense and large amount of sexual energy becomes more than the ego can handle. The first source of the grief response, then, is in the sexual instinct, and the resulting conflict between ego and the id.

The second source of the grief response is in the instinct of aggression. Spiro states,

There is a natural interplay within the psyche between the sexual instinct and the aggressive instinct. It is innately human to feel ambivalence toward the same object....⁴⁹

In other words, the source of ambivalence is the fact of the existence of these two basic instincts, and they inevitably are directed toward the same objects. This

⁴⁸Jack D. Spiro, "A Time to Mourn: the Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1961), p. 37.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 39.

begins to take place in the latter part of the oral stage, where "the child's experience with taking in food or expelling it becomes the prototype of all later perceptions of reality," and more especially in the anal stage where the retention and expulsion of the feces is the occasion for the child's learning to relate to love objects in a similar contradictory manner.⁵⁰ Thus, "the condition of ambivalence leads to the development of the super-ego during the phallic stage, and the feeling of guilt. "The child grows to dread his aggressive feelings because, to him, it is equivalent to the loss of love."⁵² In order to protect himself against his own aggressive feelings toward loved objects, an internal authority, a restraint, comes into being. This is the super-ego, and it is obvious that it is in continuous conflict with the id. Because neither the id nor the super-ego distinguishes between wish and deed, when a loved object dies, the super-ego conveys the message that one's aggressive impulses toward the dead person were the cause of the death. At the same time, even greater feelings of hostility are released and these serve merely to intensify the guilt. "This intensification of guilt can lead to a state of anxiety similar to that felt as a result of frustrated libidinal forces."⁵³

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 41. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 44.

⁵²Ibid. ⁵³Ibid., p. 49.

So both of the instincts of the person lead to the arousal of anxiety when faced with the loss of a loved object through death. Spiro then goes on to indicate that anxiety sets the pleasure-pain principle into operation, and the ego seeks to avoid the pain of anxiety through various mechanisms of defense. However, he denies that grief and anxiety are absolutely identical, saying that anxiety is merely an "emotional condition closely related to severe grief...."⁵⁴ And, "grief involves intense dread which is similar to the feeling of anxiety."⁵⁵ This similarity, however, he feels

is only temporary if the expression of grief is successful.... While the immediate reaction to a bereavement is to feel perhaps that the total self is threatened and even doomed - as in anxiety - the adjustments that should take place in the normal process of mourning assuage this feeling which is eventually dispelled.⁵⁶

Anxiety is defined by Spiro as

a feeling of intense dread, a feeling that the total self is threatened. The painful state of anxiety is also a reaction of helplessness to a traumatic situation.⁵⁷

This traumatic situation, he makes clear, is not the external event of the death per se, but the ego's perception of being weakened and overwhelmed and incapable of controlling the intrapsychic conflicts. This is the warning signal of pain which Freud defines in his second theory

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 16. ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 17. ⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 52.

as anxiety.⁵⁸ Spiro concludes: "We are now able to see the similarities between the different aspects of the response (grief) and the states of anxiety in itself."⁵⁹ And, "we see that the intense suffering of grief is a result of a traumatic situation just as anxiety is."⁶⁰

Several questions remain. Is grief only an emotion similar to anxiety? If so, how are they to be distinguished? Or, is grief a term to apply to an aggregate of several emotions, of which anxiety is one? If so, what are the other emotions involved, and how do they add to our understanding of grief?

Grief and Anxiety Identified

Several writers take the position that grief or mourning and anxiety are identical experiences. One presentation of this view is that of Melanie Klein. She seems to equate mourning with the response of a person to the loss of that upon which he feels dependent for the satisfaction of his own needs. Adult mourning is seen as the reproduction of a separation experience which is analogous to the separation experiences of the infant, which Klein

⁵⁸Freud, op. cit., XX, 140-41.

⁵⁹Spiro, op. cit., p. 54. ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 55.

actually calls infantile mourning.⁶¹ The fear "of losing his loved objects" she calls the "depressive position", and this is always coupled with a longing, "pining", for the lost loved object. In such a situation, the ego seeks defensive behavior directed against the fears and sense of separation.⁶²

The early losses and fears of loss, infantile mourning and the depressive position, are bound up first with weaning, mourning for the breast and all that it means, "namely, love, goodness, and security."⁶³ Second, in the Oedipal situation there is the fear of the loss of both parents.⁶⁴

At the same time the child is in the process of incorporating his parents, he "feels them to be live people inside his body...."⁶⁵ The behavior of the parents toward the infant, which behavior is incorporated as a living part of his own self, is determinative of the outcome of infantile mourning.

The increase of love and trust, and the diminishing of fears through happy experiences, help the baby step by step to overcome his depression and feeling of loss (mourning). They enable him to test his inner reality

⁶¹Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXI (1940), 126.

⁶²Ibid., p. 130. ⁶³Ibid., p. 126. ⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 127.

by means of outer reality. Through being loved and through the enjoyment and comfort he has in relation to people his confidence in his own as well as in other people's goodness becomes strengthened, his hope that his "good" objects and his own ego can be saved and preserved increases, at the same time as his ambivalence and acute fears of internal destruction diminish.

Unpleasant experiences and the lack of enjoyable ones, in the young child, especially lack of happy and close contact with loved people, increase ambivalence, diminish trust and hope and confirm anxieties about inner annihilation...⁶⁶

When the depressive position is at its height, the ego feels threatened by disaster, and it cannot endure without defenses of idealization or denial.⁶⁷ As indicated by the reference above, the need for these defenses diminish, indeed the mourning does not reach such a high intensity, when the ego is a strong one resulting from the incorporation of loving, trusting, need fulfilling behavior on the part of the parents. Because they are secure, the infant ego feels secure and less threatened by separation.⁶⁸

Now, connect this with normal adult mourning. The death of a loved person, a separation, involves the reactivation of all earlier "mourning" (separation) experiences. All early losses and threats of losses take over, and they are now experienced as contemporary threats to the integrity and existence of one's ego.⁶⁹ Since the unconscious experience is that of the loss of one's good inner world and the

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 128. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 131.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 135. ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 136.

increasing dominance of internal 'bad' objects, the inner world is perceived as in the process of disruption.⁷⁰

Therefore, not only does the ego seek to "reinstate the lost loved object"⁷¹ itself, but it also begins to try to bring back to life the earlier internalized good objects, originally the parents, who have been a literal living part of his inner world. "These too are felt to have gone under, to be destroyed, whenever the loss of a loved person is experienced."⁷² The awareness of mental displeasure, pain, which is a part of the work of mourning is explained by Klein, then, as being

partly due to the necessity, not only to rebuild the links to the external world and thus continuously to re-experience the loss, but at the same time and by means of this to rebuild with anguish the inner world, which is felt to be in danger of deteriorating and collapsing.⁷³

Klein seems to be saying something quite different from Freud when it comes to the matter of grief work. Whereas Freud emphasized the necessity of withdrawing libido from the lost object, Klein speaks of the preservation of the loved object. Actually, the positions are complementary. No one would deny that the reality of the death of the person must be acknowledged, and that energies that were expended upon the person when alive must now be

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 135. ⁷¹Ibid. ⁷²Ibid., p. 136.

⁷³Ibid.

directed toward other objects, and that certain satisfactions which derived from the life of the other in relationship with one's self must now be obtained elsewhere. Nevertheless, certain of the most important personal benefits deriving from relationship with the now dead person need not be relinquished, and thus libido may be utilized in the reestablishment of inner relationship with the previously incorporated aspects of the dead person. To be sure, pining for the lost object

implies dependence on it, but dependence of a kind which becomes an incentive to reparation and preservation of the object.

Thus, while grief is experienced to the full and despair at its height, the love for the object wells up and the mourner feels more strongly that life inside and outside will go on after all, and that the lost love object can be preserved within.⁷⁴

Although the first response to the death of a loved one is the threat of the destruction of one's own inner life, his own self, the ego which has incorporated numerous good objects is able to call upon these as resources of strength as one by one they are seen through reality testing to have life, and therefore,

every advance in the process of mourning results in a deepening in the individual's relationship to his inner objects, in the happiness of regaining them after they were felt to be lost....⁷⁵

This is the process of the renewal of inner life in

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 143. ⁷⁵Ibid., p. 144.

the face of the threat of its death, a regaining of the self which was threatened with destruction.

Just as the ego is stronger to face the crisis of separation by death because of the predominance of early happy experiences of love and comfort in relation to significant persons and which have been incorporated as good objects, so also in the adult mourner strengthened against the threat to his inner life by contemporary relationships with people whom he loves and trusts, who share his grief, and whose sympathy he is capable of accepting. If he has such relationships, "the restoration of the harmony of his inner world is promoted, his fears and distress are more quickly reduced."⁷⁶

The successful outcome of mourning, of grief work, is when the individual succeeds in establishing, not for the first time but again, the lost loved person as an active force in his own ego, as well as reestablishing all of the internal good objects which he felt he had lost, including the internalized parents.⁷⁷ In successful mourning, the early anxiety responses of infantile mourning must be taken into account as complicating factors, pitted against the internal good objects and reduced by their assurance of security so that the deeply buried love connected with the happy experiences with one's parents can come out and assist

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 145. ⁷⁷Ibid.

the process.⁷⁸

Josephine Hilgard et al have investigated the relation to the strength of the adult ego of bereavement experienced by that person when he was a child. The obvious assumptions are that the death of a parent is traumatic to a child and that the adult ego develops out of the experiences of childhood. Death is conceived of as one of several separation traumas which the child experiences and the successful handling of each of these prior to bereavement produces a "separation tolerance," a "prepared antidote to separation anxiety."⁷⁹ The

process of achieving independence in psychosexual development involves a whole series of separations in normal upbringing, and the way in which these earlier separations had been accomplished affected the resolution of the separation trauma produced by parental death.⁸⁰

John Bowlby begins with a statement of his thesis: "Separation anxiety, grief and mourning, and defense are phases of a single process...."⁸¹

The nature of anxiety is built upon the concept of a system of inherited instinctual drives whose energies

⁷⁹Josephine R. Hilgard, Martha F. Newman, and Fern Fish, "Strength of Adult Ego Following Childhood Bereavement," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXX (1960), 792.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹John Bowlby, "Grief and Mourning in Early Infancy and Childhood," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, XV (1960), 9.

constantly seek an object of expression. When such an object is present, the mother, for example, ties are formed. When the object is not present, the "mother figure is temporarily unavailable, separation anxiety and protest behavior follow."⁸² Anxiety, then, is simply the experience of instinctual drive without a channel of direct expression. When the object continues to be unavailable, the responses are those of grief and mourning, apparently a deeper form of anxiety. This situation of loss of the mother figure on the part of the child differs in terms of the responses made "in no material respect...from those observed in adults on loss of a loved object."⁸³

One of the normal responses to loss which is mourning is depression, characterized by "curtailed and disorganized behavior" along with the experience of lack of energy and sense of purposelessness.⁸⁴

The conclusion from these definitions is that grief and mourning are terms used to designate separation anxiety where the object is clearly lost, and that the depression felt and observed is a major form of response to this anxiety.

In regard to the prototype experience in infancy, Bowlby believes that the loss of the breast is exaggerated by most psychoanalytic writers and that the real trauma is

⁸²Ibid. ⁸³Ibid., p. 10. ⁸⁴Ibid., p. 11.

the "loss of close contact with the mother" and her expressions of love, which, between the ages of six months and four years gives rise to separation anxiety and grief and mourning of high intensity.⁸⁵ It is only an occasional writer who refers to the child's separation anxiety by its true name of grief. Although the small child does not know death, he does experience absence, and these are identical experiences. Bowlby refers to Deutsch who used the term grief for the mature ego but only separation anxiety for early childhood. However,

when records of the responses to loss of objects by adults and young children are placed side by side,... the essential similarity of the responses will be clearly recognized.⁸⁶

The psychological responses can be grouped under five headings:

1. Thought and behavior still directed toward the lost object (a sense of continuing presence);
2. Hostility (toward the lost object, others, and self, the latter experienced as guilt and unworthiness);
3. Appeals for help (often in the form of unreasonable demands, not knowing what he wants, irritability and ingratitude toward those who try to respond);
4. Despair, withdrawal, regression, disorganization (brought about by the reality of the loss), futility and emptiness and inertia, loss of organized patterns of activity, especially those of a social nature;
5. Reorganization of behavior directed toward a new object (a reconstructed relationship with the image of the lost object, plus the first phase of a new object relationship).⁸⁷

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 13. ⁸⁶Ibid., p. 16

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 17-20.

When a young child who has lost his mother is compared to an adult who has experienced the death of an emotionally significant person there is observed "a set and sequence of responses almost identical...."⁸⁸

Bowlby's criticisms of other psychoanalytic writers seems to be summarized in the following statement:

It is paradoxical that most of those who, like Abraham, have postulated as pathogenic the disruption in early childhood of a whole object relationship have failed to identify the process set in train as that of mourning; whereas those who like Melanie Klein and her school, have recognized mourning as central have concentrated so much attention on part objects, particularly the breast, and on weaning that the disruption of the whole object relationship has often been neglected.⁸⁹

Bowlby's own purpose, based on his understanding of his observations, is to demonstrate the

intimate relationship that grief has to separation anxiety...an expansion and elaboration of the viewpoint reached by Freud in the final pages of Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety.⁹⁰

Max Schur raises a pertinent criticism of Bowlby when he questions the latter's rejection of Freud's 1926 concept of anxiety as a "signal" and for making it an automatic response if the instinctual response system for attachment is not fulfilled.⁹¹ Schur does not accept, and is correct in seeing that Freud had gone beyond, the idea that the infant develops a tie to its mother "because it

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 21. ⁸⁹Ibid., p. 39. ⁹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

⁹¹Max Schur, "Discussion," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, XV (1960), 75.

has to cling, follow, escape to; (and that) it develops separation anxiety if it cannot 'terminate' these responses."⁹²

Schur goes on to present a developmental view of learning which not only builds upon Freud's concept of signal anxiety (but still a fear of separation) but also moves farther along toward the interpersonal view which is the point of view of this present work. His view is outlined as follows:

1. The utter dependence of the infant on external sources for any satisfaction.
2. Structure formation dependent upon the given stimuli.
3. Learning to connect the mother figure with the source of physiological and psychological need satisfying stimuli. Self awareness and body image start to develop.
4. Capacity to tolerate delay dependent on the development of the ego functions of temporal and physical and conceptual differentiation.
5. Becoming aware of external dangers and confusing internal with external ones. Recognition of own helplessness, the core of any traumatic situation. Feeling of helplessness overcome only by the mother, thus separation from her is traumatic and cues off anxiety.
6. The fuller development of the internal ego (the mother being the external ego) produces the response to need with the capacity of the organism to obtain satisfaction for itself, thus reducing anxiety.⁹³

Other Psychoanalytic Insights Concerning Grief

A number of writers have pointed out elements of the dynamics of grief without raising directly the issue of the relationship between it and anxiety, although in a few

⁹²Ibid., p. 76. ⁹³Ibid., p. 77

places such a relationship seems to be implied.

Robert Creegan has illustrated Deutsch's major point that if grief is not manifested, if mourning is not worked through, it will persist as a strong unconscious affect which continues to seek expression in substitute forms. He also has demonstrated that a high degree of ambivalence in a relationship can produce a pathological reaction when the emotionally significant person dies. He did this by reference to a boy who, following the death of his mother, expressed his repressed hostility toward her by killing his dog and then sought to resolve the grief by identification with her in the form of psychogenic "heart attacks."⁹⁴

Although this is an interpretation of a pathological act, it has carry-over value in understanding that even in normal grief there are many aspects of the behavior of the mourner which can be seen as symbolic acts which seek to deal with the loss by recreating some of the elements of the relationships.

The factor of aggression in grief is also considered by Edmund Bergler, but he has an interesting twist to the pathological aspect of it. In neurotic mourning, "the inner conflict has its basis in penance for repressed aggressive thoughts harbored toward the deceased....(the mourner)

⁹⁴Robert F. Creegan, "A Symbolic Action During Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXXVII (1942), 403-05.

behaves intrapsychically as if he were a murderer."⁹⁵ If this aggression was genuine, then the mourning is normal, that is, of relatively short duration. But if there is either prolonged mourning or lack of affect in bereavement, the response points to what Bergler calls "repressed passivity, secondarily warded off with pseudo-aggression."⁹⁶

In other words, in the latter reaction, the person understands himself as accusing himself for his aggression toward the deceased, when in reality he had failed to be aggressive. Now, however, the original guilt the person experienced for not having been aggressive is shifted over and interpreted as guilt for the presumed aggression.

Bergler's conclusion concerning the duration of mourning is that the time consumed is not related to the amount of love in the relationship except perhaps in an inverse ratio. A greater amount of genuine love on the part of the bereaved for the deceased person does not produce a longer period of mourning; in fact, in these circumstances it will tend to be shorter.

Bergler seems correctly to be assuming that all relationships involve ambivalence: love and aggression. He also seems to be building upon the assumption that the less

⁹⁵Edmund Bergler, "Psychopathology and Duration of Mourning in Neurotics," Journal of Clinical Psychopathology, IX (1948), 478.

⁹⁶Ibid.

complex the interaction between the two, the more directly and clearly each can be expressed. The less distortion involved in either love or aggression, the more realistic and meaningful is the relationship, and when the relationship is broken in death, the less amount of grief work is necessary. Even if genuine aggression is simply repressed, the grief work is not unduly complex. However, if there is presumed aggression on the part of a person who has actually been passive, and particularly if it is this presumed aggression which is repressed, then the complexity of the intrapsychic condition is such as to make the attempts to externalize these feelings either through verbal or other symbolic acts during bereavement so difficult that their externalization cannot be adequately or completely accomplished by the usual modes of expressions offered to the bereaved person by our cultural forms.

As a clue to the person involved with the bereaved person, Bergler's statement, "every protracted mourning is suspicious--every exaggeration is,"⁹⁷ can be taken as a good reason to look beneath the surface of the bereaved's actions for a complex intrapsychic situation.

Albert Rosner has dealt with what he calls "mourning before the fact," which process may be both conscious and unconscious. This process serves as a defense against loss

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 482.

by withdrawing libido from the object and cathecting a substitute object, anticipating the loss of the original object and protecting against it. In the case presented the subject's real fear was the loss of the mother, but he shifted this fear to that of loss of the father and exhibited acts of mourning for the father even prior to his death. But even without the mechanism of substitution operating, "mourning for an object before instead of after the occasion of its loss is a normal vicissitude of the process of mourning...."⁹⁸

This process can be understood as a defense mechanism against the anxiety of separation, developing early in the person's life, and actually, within limits, serving the ego in a constructive manner, protecting it against sudden and overwhelming threat from the loss of a cathected object.

Rosner's analysis actually seems to be a presupposition of Samuel Lehrman's study, although the latter is the earlier. Lehrman has described grief as "painful affect, loss of interest in the outside world and inability to love or be loved."⁹⁹ It is assumed that under certain circumstances, in the case of the elderly person for example,

⁹⁸Albert A. Rosner, "Mourning Before the Fact," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, X (1962), 569.

⁹⁹Samuel R. Lehrman, "Reactions to an Untimely Death," Psychiatric Quarterly, XXX (1956), 568.

grief work, detaching libido from the object, is done prior to the person's death. However, reactions to an untimely death are different in that the ego has had less preparation for the loss, and thus it perceives threat to itself as greater. At these times it is especially important that substitute objects are immediately available. "Reactions to untimely death tend to follow the pattern of grief reactions which represent a defense against unbearable, painful affect...."¹⁰⁰

The traumatic nature of this sudden deprivation at the death of a loved one is also intensified when the deceased had previously "assumed the role of the original object and therefore toward whom libidinal investment is especially tenacious."¹⁰¹ Martin Peck cites a neurotic man for whom the wife had become a mother substitute, thus when the wife died, her "death reactivated the early mother relationship to still deeper regressive levels...."¹⁰² The grief was complicated by the deep resentment at what was psychically perceived as desertion by the wife (mother). The man sought to deal with his inability to withdraw libido and redistribute it according to the reality principle

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 576.

¹⁰¹Martin W. Peck, "Notes on Identification in a Case of Depression Reactive to the Death of a Loved Object," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, VIII (1939), 2.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 17.

by incorporation of (identification with) the dead object. This became the precipitating cause for later attacks of depression.¹⁰³

Edoardo Weiss has spoken of grief as the conflict between uncontrollable desire for the loved person and recognition that the person no longer exists, between the inner world of needs and the outer world of reality, with the latter gradually taking over dominance of the ego.¹⁰⁴ Focusing on grief work, he indicates that the transformation comes about with the process of concentrating on every object and situation associated with the deceased until the person can accept the object or situation without the intense inner longing. The primary emotional support which makes this possible is the establishment of emotional rapport with other persons.¹⁰⁵

The mechanism of identification is seen as another important aspect of grief work, as the impulse of love is no longer directed toward the actual person but to the restoration of that person within himself. Apparently rephrasing to some degree the point of Abraham in regard to what he termed introjection, Weiss states: "only to

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰⁴Edoardo Weiss, Principles of Psychodynamics (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1950), p. 10.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 11.

the extent to which the deceased person can actually be substituted by such an internalization does the ego feel emotionally free from the lost loved object."¹⁰⁶

Karl Stern et al have reported that in an investigation of the grief reactions of twenty-five subjects from 53 to 70 years of age, they have discovered significantly fewer "overt mental manifestations of grief (and) of conscious guilt feelings," but that there have been a "preponderance of somatic illness."¹⁰⁷ The question is raised as to whether the somatic illnesses represent self-punishment (the substitute act for the otherwise unexpressed guilt), whether they are the expression of the death wish, or whether they are simply an identification with the deceased. The hostility toward others is explained in terms of the projection of the hated aspects of the dead person onto the available living persons.

All the behavior phenomena of the bereaved are to be understood as defenses "against dynamic forces that would be destructive to a weakened ego."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁰⁷Karl Stern, Gwendolyn M. Williams, and Miguel Prados, "Grief Reactions in Later Life," American Journal of Psychiatry, CVIII (1951), 289.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 293

II. NON-ANALYTIC PSYCHIATRIC CONTRIBUTIONS

A provocative article by George Engel lays the foundation for understanding grief technically as a disease and thus of legitimate medical concern.

Grief is the characteristic response to the loss of a valued object, be it a loved person, a cherished possession, a job, status home, country, an ideal, a part of the body, etc.¹⁰⁹

The basic etiological factor is the "real, threatened, or even fantasied object loss."¹¹⁰

Engel uses the term "uncomplicated grief" where most others have said "normal grief." The reason for this is that grief can be thought of as normal in a statistical sense only, certainly not in relation to the total health of the individual. When considered in the light of this latter criterion, even uncomplicated grief is "a manifest and gross departure from the dynamic state considered representative of health and well-being."¹¹¹ The term pathological need not be shied away from, referring simply to the deviation away from the state of health of the organism. And when grief is examined it is seen to fulfill "all the criteria of a discrete syndrome, with relatively predictable symptomatology and course."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹George L. Engel, "Is Grief a Disease?" Psychosomatic Medicine, XXIII (1961), p. 18.

¹¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 20. ¹¹²Ibid., p. 18.

The question is raised in regard to the implications of such a view for medical research and practice. Engel answers:

1. Grief, when conceived of in this way, becomes a legitimate subject for investigation by medical scientists.

2. The occurrence of grief immediately preceeding or at the same time as other illness cannot be presumed to be irrelevant or coincidental until all the data are explored in a manner comparable to other aspects of the illness.

3. If the actual or even threatened loss of an object so consistently disturbs a person's total adjustment, then this points to an etiological factor of high importance. It is also possible that biochemical physiological processes associated with grief may become the condition for more serious somatic changes.

4. The concept of object loss cannot be dissociated from the operation of the central nervous system. Grief, then, is firmly established as a physiological reaction.

5. Therefore, in any illness the patient's environment of "significant psychic objects" (persons, job, home) must be taken into consideration as a possible factor.

6. If grief is the reaction to object loss, then the maintenance and replacement of objects must be understood as important elements in the attaining and sustaining of health and adjustment. This means that the medical team and its procedures must see as part of their healing function the assumption of the role of significant objects for the patient.¹¹³

Something of this approach to grief had already been made in the now classic investigations of Erich Lindemann. Data gathered from psychiatric interviews with 101 bereaved persons led him to approach acute grief as "a definite

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 20-22.

syndrome with psychological and somatic symptomatology."¹¹⁴

Symptoms common to all were

a feeling of tightness in the throat, choking with shortness of breath, need for sighing, and an empty feeling in the abdomen, lack of muscular power, and and intense subjective distress described as tension or mental pain.¹¹⁵

An elaboration of the subjective experience mentioned "a slight sense of unreality, a feeling of increased emotional distance from other people..., and... intense preoccupation with the image of the deceased."¹¹⁶ Much of the behavior of the deceased was directed toward avoidance of the symptoms.

Other behavior noticed was the preoccupation with guilt, evidenced by detailed searching of the relationship prior to the death for things the bereaved did wrong or the proper things he failed to do. There is a tendency to lose the warmth of other relationships and there is observed rejection of others, even to the point of irritability and anger. This behavior was sufficient to be disturbing to the bereaved himself. Generally there is a restlessness, aimless movement, looking for something to do, yet an inability to initiate constructive action and follow projects through to completion. There is an increase of speech,

¹¹⁴Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September 1963), 8.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 9. ¹¹⁶Ibid.

especially in regard to the deceased. Finally, a tendency for aspects of the behavior of the deceased to be adopted by the bereaved was noted.¹¹⁷

What are termed morbid grief reactions were either postponement of grief or simply distortions of usual reactions. Among the latter were "overactivity without a sense of loss" (hypomania), exhibiting symptoms related to the final illness of the deceased, a psychosomatic illness, a change in relationship to friends and relatives moving toward social isolation, extreme hostility against specific persons or struggling with such great effort against these feelings that all affect is so reduced that an almost schizophrenic picture of apathy is exhibited, "lasting loss of patterns of social interaction," self punitive behavior, and agitated depression.¹¹⁸

Lindemann isolated factors which were to some degree predictive of the type and severity of reaction. Persons with obsessive and depressive traits prior to grief were most likely to develop agitated depression. Intensity of interaction with the deceased seemed proportionate to the grief reactions observed and reported. Where that interaction involved feelings of hostility which could not be fully expressed there was the greatest likelihood that hostile and aggressive behavior would be a major character-

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 10. ¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 12-15.

istic of the grief reaction.¹¹⁹

The proper management of the symptoms from the point of view of the "helping" professions has as its central task "sharing the patient's grief work, namely, his efforts at extricating himself from the bondage to the deceased and at finding new patterns of rewarding interaction."¹²⁰ The task of the patient is

to accept the pain of bereavement...review his relationship with the deceased,...become acquainted with the alterations in his own modes of emotional reaction. He will have to find an acceptable formulation of his future relationship to the deceased,...verbalize his feelings of guilt, and,...find persons around him whom he can use as 'primers' for the acquisition of new patterns of conduct.¹²¹

III. SUMMARY

Most of the psychoanalytic writers surveyed apparently did not have as their major purpose the investigation of grief as such, but were simply reporting the psychodynamics of human behavior as they saw it, and this occasionally involved the reporting of grief. Although many technical differences are seen between the analysts, many valid insights were forthcoming.

Adult mourning is similar to if not the same thing as the separation experiences of the infant. A part of ego development is the incorporation of parts of the behavior

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 15-16. ¹²⁰Ibid., p. 16. ¹²¹Ibid.

of the parents. Where love and trust have been predominant parental attitudes, these are incorporated as good objects, fear is reduced, and confidence in the preservation of one's own ego is increased. Opposite parental attitudes confirm infantile anxiety concerning inner annihilation. Later when other relationships are established, there is the tendency for them to become substitutes for the original object of libidinal investment. When the object is lost, there is a natural resistance to the reality of separation, since in a way it has become a part of one's own ego. Thus the ego perceives a threat to the self, and gives the signal of anxiety.

Many writers raise the relation between adult mourning and infantile anxiety, although Bowlby is the only one who identifies the two with real clarity. The death of an emotionally significant person reactivates memories of earlier separation experiences. The pain which is felt is the sense of the collapse of one's inner world. In losing a loved object the individual feels himself unloved and incapable of loving. Therefore he despairs of his life and future.

At this time, however, the person who has incorporated good objects can call on them for strength; they can be experienced as still having life, and one's total experience can be that of the renewal of inner life in the face of threat of its death. Therefore, the mourning pro-

cess should be seen not only as withdrawing libido from the lost object and directing it toward another object, but also the calling back to life within one's self of the living, incorporated elements of the deceased. An aid in the process is a separation tolerance produced by the successful handling of childhood separations. Another source of strength in accomplishing the task of mourning are other contemporary relations of love and trust.

Ambivalent emotions exist in all relationships and thus are a factor in grief. Where grief is exaggerated, strong unconscious factors should be suspected. Where grief itself is repressed, it is like all other strong repressed emotions: it continues to influence behavior and strive for expression.

Several writers compared grief and melancholia, or depression, and similar features were noted. Abraham's and Freud's sharp distinctions between the two reactions were rejected in favor of a view similar to that of Bowlby, which saw a difference only in degree rather than kind.

The concept of grief as a disease is a provocative one, and Lindemann's investigation lent evidence to the conceptualizing of it as emotional disorder and its relation to somatic pathology.

CHAPTER IV

CONCEPTS OF GRIEF IN PASTORAL CARE

One of the professional people most frequently in personal contact with bereaved persons is the minister. One of his major concerns has always been that of understanding the grief situation and seeking to be supportive to those involved in this form of emotional distress. It would seem logical to suppose that with this concern and involvement and with the increased tendency to relate psychological insights to the performance of the ministry, considerable material dealing with grief would be found in the literature of pastoral care. Such is the case. Included within the definition of pastoral care here are not only those ministers writing out of their own experience and investigations, but also in a few cases psychiatrists whose articles are directed toward the ministry and published in the latter's professional papers and journals.

The writing deals for the most part with three approaches to the subject: (1) the nature and meaning of grief, (2) the role of the minister as he functions to facilitate grief work, and (3) the conduct of the funeral. Since the focus of this present work falls within only the first category, the nature of grief itself and its precise definition, much significant material dealing with the attitude and functioning of the minister as counselor

in the situation of bereavement and the meaning and nature of the funeral will not be reviewed here. Excluded from the first chronological summary of the understanding of grief as portrayed in the literature of pastoral care will be the works of William F. Rogers, Paul E. Irion, and Edgar N. Jackson, whose importance both in the content and extent of their writings places them in a category of their own. Their work will be examined in detail following a review of other material.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC WRITING FOR THE MINISTER

Ina May Greer has pointed out that grief is "the result of death or of other forms of separation, or may even be a response to the threat of loss."¹ The implication of this way of stating the source of grief is that actual loss and threat of loss produce something of the same emotional response. Both are threats to the security and integrity of the self.

The process of lessening the sharpness of the pain of grief is facilitated by talking. "Talking is an act, and by talking the mourner works off his grief."² A major

¹Ina May Greer, "Grief Must Be Faced," Christian Century, LXII (1945), 269.

²Ibid., p. 270.

reason that this seems to be true is that talking assumes a listener, thus in the process a new relationship is established or an old one is deepened. The unstated assumption here is that a major need of the mourner is for meaningful relationship. It is stated that custom makes it possible for the person to listen to the mourner and accept his intense emotions in a way which one might not ordinarily do, in this way fulfilling in part the function of the deceased.

The interrelational nature of grief is further elaborated:

It is almost a rule that the depth of bereavement will be proportionate to the area of devastation; that is, the greater the degree of interaction with the lost person and the fewer outside interests and independent patterns of conduct, the more crippling the grief.³

Brewster has spoken of grief as "the reaction of an individual when he or she ceases to interact with a meaningful person, lost by death or separation."⁴ Significantly he has placed the occasion for grief not simply upon the external loss of the person but upon the cessation of personal interaction. There is agreement with Greer in that Brewster sees "a definite relationship between the severity of grief and the intensity of interaction which formerly

³Ibid., p. 271.

⁴Henry H. Brewster, "The Grief Situation," Psychiatry and Religion, Joshua L. Liebman, ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 186.

existed between the bereaved and the deceased."⁵

He goes on to point out that this need not have been predominantly an affectionate relationship, but that there may well have been a great deal of hostility.⁶ It is now well understood that a person can become just as dependent upon a relationship in which there is a large amount of hostility as upon one in which love is predominant, and the cessation of either type of interaction obviously leads to the disruption of established patterns of behavior and thus creates a state of emotional deprivation which is threatening to one's self-structure. It is this to which the person reacts in grief.

Lindemann has equated adequate grief work with suffering openly and deeply. The communication of remembered experiences with the dead person seems to be the emotional equivalent of reliving them, thus emancipating the bereaved from bondage to the deceased and making him capable of establishing new relationships. It is suggested that one can learn "to meet losses adequately without having to be afraid of them and without being overwhelmed by them."⁷ It is interesting that the element of fear of loss is introduced as seeming to be at the core of the grief

⁵Ibid., p. 188. ⁶Ibid.

⁷Lloyd E. Foster, Erich Lindemann, and Rollin Fairbanks, "Grief," Pastoral Psychology, I (1950), 30.

reaction, and that this element can be reduced by the prior condition of having "warm relationships to a variety of people who serve different emotional needs."⁸ The answer to the fear of loss which is grief is relationships with others, preparatory in relationships prior to bereavement, therapeutic in relationships after the death of the significant other.

George Krupp and Bernard Kligfeld have made a distinction between bereavement and grief by limiting the meaning of the term grief "chiefly to the inner emotions, attitudes, and thoughts of the mourner," while bereavement includes grief but also has reference to the total overt appearance and behavior of the person.⁹ This distinction properly focuses our attention upon the inner dynamics of a person's response to the death of a person with whom he has been emotionally involved, and leads us to look at the behavioral patterns of depression, withdrawal, agitation, irritation, simply as symptoms, as attempts to cope with the intensity of the inner condition which is created by the external situation of loss by death.

Krupp and Kligfeld also lead us to the nature of the core of the grief reaction when they say: "In our

⁸Ibid.

⁹George Rand Krupp and Bernard Kligfeld, "The Bereavement Reaction: A Cross-Cultural Evaluation," Journal of Religion and Health, I (1962), 224.

society...intimacy of relationship to fewer people makes bereavement personally significant and therefore anxiety-producing."¹⁰ The implication seems to be that grief is a response to the loss of that upon which we have understood our identity as persons to rest. In the organization of some societies the identification is broadly based: persons are emotionally related to and find their own existence in the whole tribe or community. Therefore, their own selfhood is threatened only when the existence and unity of the whole group is threatened. In our society, our personal selfhood has come into being through close and intimate relationships with a relatively few persons within the larger group: our parents, siblings, other family, especially close friends, a spouse, children. So the loss of any one of these is threatening to the unity and existence of the personal self, thus anxiety-producing, the response of grief.

Clemens Benda has also spoken interrelationally of grief as the complex of human reactions to "the loss of a human relationship, and thus the cessation of human interaction, which may have been an important factor in a person's existence."¹¹ This view is made somewhat more

¹⁰Ibid., p. 243.

¹¹Clemens E. Benda, "Bereavement and Grief Work," Journal of Pastoral Care, XVI (1962), 2.

explicit as Benda contrasts the reactions of the elderly with those who are younger. The former have been observed in other studies as tending to replace the emotional reactions by somatic symptoms.¹² But in a younger person "the loss of an emotional relationship causes a void which is met by the anxiety and guilt of the survivor...."¹³ Benda does not overlook the existential anxiety element as he quotes Marcel to the effect that "the reality of death as the symbol of our finitude has to be accepted."¹⁴ He reflects the outline of this present work, seeing in all grief the threat of loss or separation, guilt, and existential anxiety, but without stating fully that all three of these are experiences of anxiety based upon the single fear response, the loss of one's own self.

II. THE LITERATURE OF PASTORAL CARE

A Chronological Survey

Russell Dicks strikes at the interpersonal heart of the grief experience and the cause of the pain which is the felt emotion, as well as the interpersonal solution:

When a loved one dies a part of us dies, too; how much of us depends on how much of us that loved one

¹²Karl Stern, "Grief Reactions in Later Life," American Journal of Psychiatry, CVII (1951), 289.

¹³Benda, op cit., p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 9.

occupied.... Whether we live on, and take up our lives creatively again, becoming a whole and healthy person, depends upon who comes to us in love, not to replace the loved one gone, but to give us strength, to stir new interests, hopes, ambitions....¹⁵

Overlooked in this statement of Dicks is emotional ambivalence. He speaks of the loved person, but without taking into account the role of the negative emotions. However, this omission should not be interpreted as his denial of their role.

Wayne Oates has one of the more helpful statements concerning the nature of grief itself, and he is one of the few who places anxiety by name at the center of it:

The anxiety of grief is over a significant loss, or apprehensiveness over the threat of such a loss. The amount of anxiety determines any efforts to comfort the grief-stricken person.¹⁶

Three influences are seen as producing the intensity of the anxiety of grief. The first is the "depth and quality of relationship between the bereaved and the person whom he has lost or is about to lose...."¹⁷ Oates does not go on at this point to elaborate upon the precise meaning of the terms "depth and quality of relationship." It would be helpful to know just how his extensive experience

¹⁵Russell L. Dicks, "Grief," Religion and Health, III (1954), 6-7.

¹⁶Wayne Oates, Anxiety in Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), p. 48.

¹⁷Ibid.

has led him to evaluate the emotional nature of the personal relationship and the intensity of the anxiety of grief. Is it simply the fact that the more one loves another the greater is the grief? Or is it the element of emotional dependence apart from mature love? Or does it have something to do with the degree of emotional ambivalence?

The second and third influences upon the degree of anxiety produced by the death of a significant other as Oates views it are the manner of death and the length of illness prior to death.¹⁸

This anxiety of grief expresses itself in various ways as the grief process moves through six stages, each clearly identifiable, even though they may not be entirely separated chronologically:

1. "The shocking blow of the loss-in itself."¹⁹

Oates feels that the anxiety has not been activated at this stage and that a person simply continues on automatically for a brief time. His illustration of a woman who fainted five consecutive times upon being told of the death of her husband, while appropriate to the category of "shocking blow," does not seem to fit his elaboration of this category in terms of "the momentum of life" carrying one on as he had been. Rather, it seems as if anxiety is triggered

¹⁸Ibid. ¹⁹Ibid., p. 52.

so abruptly that the organism does not have time to prepare adequate defenses, and therefore reacts either with unbelief and denial and the appearance of continuing as before, or else with the gross defensive reaction of fainting, loss of consciousness, temporary amnesia.

2. "The numbing effect of the shock."²⁰ This stage is understandable in the terms just used, the organism's emotional anesthesia as protection against the dire threat to one's self, a common enough defense mechanism against anxiety.

3. "The struggle between fantasy and reality."²¹ Unbelief and denial can no longer stand unchallenged in the face of the fact, but the self does not give up part of itself without a struggle and therefore seeks to hold on to that which it has needed emotionally through fantasy: "the individual's anxiety takes the form of 'steeling one's self' against the breakthrough of reality upon the cherished fantasies of the departed love object."²²

4. "The break-through of a flood of grief."²³ This is the open feeling and expression of anxiety, the cathartic action.

5. "Selective memory and stabbing pain."²⁴ Following the waves of severe overt grief expression, there

²⁰Ibid. ²¹Ibid., p. 53. ²²Ibid.

²³Ibid. ²⁴Ibid., p. 54.

is a lessening intensity of anxiety as one begins to pick up the normal routine of life, but there remain occasional memories which bring with them brief periods of sharp mental pain. During this time feelings of hostility and guilt seek both expression and assimilation in an integrated manner into one's present self.

6. "The acceptance of loss and the affirmation of life itself."²⁵ Oates' speaks of the psychological "death, burial, and resurrection of ...selfhood in the process of grief...."²⁶ The individual who has felt the life of his selfhood threatened by the death of a significant person now overcomes the threat "by having taken the loss image of the loved one into his own concept of himself."²⁷

Richard K. Young reports the findings of the procedures of the Chaplain's ministry to 331 families of patients who had died at the North Carolina Baptist Hospital. The first reactions noted were crying (83%) and bewilderment (95%). A need to talk about the deceased and a tendency to idealize them was observed in 94% of the cases. The presence of larger groups of relatives seemed to facilitate early grief work as the family members stimulated and supported one another. Of the 331 families, 163 accepted the death realistically and with a healthy expression of feelings. Clearcut guilt was observed in twenty-

²⁵Ibid. ²⁶Ibid. ²⁷Ibid., p. 55.

eight families and resentment and hostility in twenty-nine. Shock was predominant in sixty-four.

It was noted that grief can be complicated by other factors. Therefore, the role of the minister in encouraging the verbalizing of feelings and the talking about the deceased and in keeping the bereaved reality oriented can be therapeutic.²⁸

Charles Kean has presented what will be three major points related to the thesis of this present work by saying that he has observed three aspects of the problem of grief in almost every situation: "guilt, sense of loss, and the reminder of one's own eventual death."²⁹ The last of these is sometimes clear, sometimes less conscious, but the fear of death is an almost universal anxiety and it raises the existential question, "Has life any meaning other than that which we as human beings put into it?"³⁰ If the answer to the question is negative, then death threatens us by seeming to wipe out everything that matters. Again Kean is in line with the direction of this work not only in the elements of grief but also in his interpersonal orientation, which he states, but does not elaborate:

²⁸Richard K. Young and Albert L. Meiburg, Spiritual Therapy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 156-160.

²⁹Charles D. Kean, Christian Faith and Pastoral Care (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1961), p. 105.

³⁰Ibid., p. 110.

People need each other to be themselves, and to the extent that our lives are seriously involved in the lives of other people we are deprived of part of our own selfhood by their going.³¹

Carroll Wise comments on the central significance of anxiety in the grief reaction of a woman the death of whose husband forced upon her the necessity of changing deep-seated emotional patterns. Such a change in life style was disruptive of her security, anxiety producing.³²

Charles Bachmann has said simply that grief is a painful emotion, and that it is linked with and sometimes involves all three of the basic emotions of love, hate, and fear.³³ This seems to imply that grief is another, separate emotion, distinguishable from these others. However, if this be the case, grief is not clearly defined in such a way as to make it distinguishable. Its unique attribute is that it is the result of the external situation of loss of relationship, separation from a significant other, and which, at least in some of its forms, somehow involves a search for identity.³⁴ It is stressed that

³¹Ibid., pp. 107-08.

³²Carroll Wise, "Comments," Casebook in Pastoral Counseling, Newman S. Cryer and John M. Vayhinger, eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 75.

³³Charles G. Bachmann, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 13.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.

cessation of any significant human ties produces reactions similar to that of grief, thereby defining grief clearly in terms of interpersonal loss.³⁵

The relational aspects of grief are assumed, but are expressed only in the perspective of the grief work that must take place and not in the context of an attempt to state why separation is experienced as a painful emotion.

The Three Major Contributors

Three other writers who have dealt with grief have not been included in this survey: Rogers, Irion, and Jackson. This omission was in order to give an opportunity for a more thorough investigation of their works. This has been made necessary because of the years spanned by their writing on this subject and the amount and significance of the material produced by them.

William F. Rogers. Grief is the result of any separation experience. Within this experience, the key question to be asked is, "What did the dead person mean to the bereaved?" For example, a morbid relationship leads rather naturally to a morbid grief reaction.³⁶ One psychiatrist is quoted as saying,

³⁵Ibid., p. 71

³⁶William F. Rogers, "The Place of Grief Work in Mental Health," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, Boston, 1949), p. 75.

The severity of the grief is determined by the importance of the relationship to the bereaved. The sense of loss can be overwhelming if the individual feels that he has lost everything. He may so identify himself with the lost person that he feels he himself has died.³⁷

Rogers goes on to discuss the dynamics of grief, the response cued off by a broken interpersonal relationship. The history of the process of establishing a relationship is referred to, stressing the fusing of the self with other selves and objects. Thus, in sorrow it is as if a "part of the larger self has been torn away."³⁸

A second factor involved "in the psycho-dynamics of grief is the presence of a static image of the deceased."³⁹ There is not the flexibility of the healthy living relationship, but what is retained is a stereotyped image.

Third, grief is an emotion, and as such has its physiological concomitants. The fourth and fifth factors are related to the concept of emotion and refer to the complicating roles played by hostility and hate and guilt. As an emotion, its conscious elements can also be forced out of consciousness: denied, delayed, distorted. Yet the force of the emotion is not destroyed; it continues to operate as a disturbing factor in the personality. Emotion always seeks expression, pushes toward action. Related to the emotion of grief is the fact that there is the tendency

³⁷Ibid., p. 77. ³⁸Ibid., p. 87. ³⁹Ibid.

for all of the emotions associated with the relationship with the person now dead to be released and expressed. "It is safe to say that in any love relationship there is also present the feeling of hostility that is born of personal frustrations and anger situations."⁴⁰ If hostility is present it is also safe to say that some degree of guilt is present. These guilt feelings may arise from a number of sources and there may or may not be a real basis for them. Yet if they are there, they are disturbing no matter how well or poorly founded they are.⁴¹ The expression of them is necessary.

Suggestive of the behavioral responses of persons as they seek to lessen the threat and pain of grief are what Rogers calls "false fronts", attempts to cover up and deny what is really seeking expression. Among these are vivaciousness (activity and expansiveness), irritability (displaced hostility), identification with the deceased, physical illness, false grief (displaced from one object to another), deep depression.⁴² These are all what have been called defense or adjustive mechanisms which many people use to cope with anxiety. The solution to these denials of reality lies in going through the grief work which

⁴⁰William F. Rogers, Ye Shall Be Comforted (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 21.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 23. ⁴²Ibid., pp. 51-54.

should have been done in the first place.

It is noted that there is a tendency for the bereaved to withdraw at the very time he needs personal support, implying that it is the duty of others to go to him. The larger the field of interaction between the bereaved and the deceased, the more difficult it is to emancipate oneself from the psychological ties, since the whole field of the interaction seems to disappear with the death of the person. The meeting of the needs of the grief-stricken is clearly facilitated by the presence of someone whom he trusts and accepts and to whom he can talk. In this meaningful relationship the expression of sorrow and the repetition of the fact and conditions of the loss are made, hostility and guilt are dissipated through verbalization and the acceptance of these by the other, the sharpness of the mental pain is reduced, the process of emancipation from the deceased is begun, and a bridge is formed for the establishment of other relationships and the finding of a new meaning for one's life.⁴³

Rogers' concepts are based upon the development of the self out of the interaction of the organism with the material of its environment. Life is viewed as interactional, with the human organism building

⁴³William F. Rogers, "Needs of the Bereaved," Pastoral Psychology, I (June, 1950), 17-21.

into its emotional constellation not only parts of its own body, but the objects of its environment, including other people. People and objects become an extension of one's own personality. Feeling tone develops around these persons and objects according to their importance in the individual's attempt to meet his emotional needs.⁴⁴

The mother becomes one of the first extensions of the infant's world as she meets his needs. Over a period of time other persons and objects become emotionally important as they, too, meet the child's security needs. These persons and objects

take on meaning to the individual according to his interpretation of their place in his subjective world.... This world literally becomes part of one's personality pattern and can be removed only with pain and damage to his emotional life.⁴⁵

Whenever a person loses by any means the physical reality of one of these emotionally significant persons or objects it produces the response of perceived threat to the self into which they had been incorporated, this threat is experienced as emotional pain, and this is what we refer to as grief. It is also what has been termed anxiety, although Rogers does not say this.

He does refer to A. Philip Guiles who had considered birth as being the first grief experience. He also speaks of later experiences of separation of emotionally signifi-

⁴⁴William F. Rogers, "The Pastor's Work with Grief," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September, 1963), 19-26.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 19-20.

cant persons and objects as grief experiences. The most dramatic, the most final and irreversible loss, and therefore generally the most painful, results from the death of a person with whom one is emotionally identified.

The important point to remember, however, is that grief is not the result of what happens to the loved one. It is rather the result of what happens to the bereaved. Something of great importance to the individual, something that is a part of his psychic life, has been torn out, leaving a great pain, the emotion which we call grief.⁴⁶

In the discussion of emotion which follows, one significant insight has been added to the points presented earlier in connection with the characteristics of emotion. This is the element of memory: "...the memory of a painful experience which has not previously been reviewed is likely to bring back the emotion which accompanied the experience."⁴⁷

This definition of grief clarifies the meaning of one of the remedies for it, that of entering into new relationships. Yet Rogers wisely advises care in seeking to work the bereaved person back into a group relationship too rapidly. One of the obvious grief responses is the tendency to isolate oneself. Yet to bring the person into a group before he is capable of relating to others may only increase his sense of isolation. He may become prepared for group interaction through a therapeutic relationship

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 20. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 21.

with one or with only a few individuals.⁴⁸

This definition of grief also points toward a concept of preparation for separation experiences. The basic response to life of confidence, trust, security is a product of the child's having grown up in a home where genuine affection has been shown him. There develops a readiness to relate to other persons and these others are allowed to become a vital part of one's own life.⁴⁹ The loss to one's own self is the source of the pain of grief. At the same time, although Rogers does not explicitly say so here, the person who has readily incorporated genuinely loved objects into himself and who feels secure in the world of persons is the one who is best prepared to face and deal constructively with broken relationship, grief, when it does come.

It appears to this writer as if the emotion which Rogers has here called grief has been defined in terms which are precisely the same words that can be used in defining the reaction of anxiety in an interpersonal context as separation. In fact, it is in this way that grief can be seen as one occasion in logical continuity with the whole of one's style of life.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 25-26.

⁴⁹Rogers, Ye Shall Be Comforted, p. 16.

Paul E. Irion. Irion has used psychological insights concerning the dynamics of grief as a take-off point for a discussion of the ethical implications involved in various ways of handling this intense emotion. The ethical norm is posited as the health and wholeness of the human personality, and he demonstrates that many contemporary cultural and individual expectations and patterns of behavior are "deterrents to integration of the grief-torn personality."⁵⁰ It is assumed "that the primary objective is the emergence of a new self which has assimilated the grief experience and grown because of it," and that "anything which divides and disintegrates the person...is wrong."⁵¹

Although he does not discuss the development of the self, simply saying that other persons can become a part of our lives, Irion certainly is correct in his conclusion that "grief places a tremendous stress upon the wholeness of a person."⁵² In such a broken relationship there is "a disruption of the whole concept of the self and its purpose in life."⁵³ It is incumbent upon the bereaved person and those about him to seek through every means to maintain and strengthen his selfhood and seek a new

⁵⁰Paul E. Irion, "Toward an Ethical Understanding of Grief Situations," Pastoral Psychology, IV (December 1953), 26.

⁵¹Ibid. ⁵²Ibid. ⁵³Ibid.

orientation for the self.

One of the ethical problems reflects the disintegration of the personality rather than integration, having "to do with masochistic elements," expressed in the self-punishment of withdrawal, rejection of social pleasures, over-activity, or other morbid forms of grief.⁵⁴ This, of course, is aggression toward others turned inward because of the inability to express it openly either through fear of social disapproval or because it would be intolerable to one's own self-concept.

All of the ethical problems in grief indicate "that the needs and feelings of the individual self be given the highest appreciation and understanding."⁵⁵

The foundation for an understanding of grief is laid in the following three propositions:

In the first place, when we see the meaningfulness of life described in terms of interpersonal relationships, we recognize that the life of every individual is in part determined by, even made up of, the lives of other individuals. When one life is removed by death, it causes a disruption of a complex web of relationships. The amount and depth of the interaction seem to bear a direct relationship to the depth and scope of the grief reaction.

Secondly, the fact of the depth dimension of human behavior aids our ability to understand the great variety of reactions which are manifested in the bereaved. We see that the behavior of the mourner not only is a manifestation of a sense of loss or deprivation but may reflect a multitude of other feelings which have their roots deep within the unconsciousness

⁵⁴Ibid. ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 26.

of the person. This would lead one to assume that the understanding of a person's grief is inevitably accompanied by a concomitant understanding of the person himself.

Thirdly, we recognize that the therapy for bereavement does not involve a denial of the tensions and inner conflicts which are involved nor an escape from them. Genuine therapy results only when there is a constructive assimilation of and adjustment to these conflicts....⁵⁶

Among the complex of feelings which comprise grief are those of sorrow, which he designates as a positive feeling, and the negative feelings of hostility and guilt.⁵⁷ Grief, then, seems to be defined not as a single emotion but as a total ambivalent and painful emotional condition, only one facet of which is sorrow, an undefined positive emotion. This reaction to personal loss brings about not only a disruption of usual behavioral patterns, but also "a dislocation of certain elements of the role of the self."⁵⁸ There is a gap in the constellation of interpersonal relationships.⁵⁹ Therefore, if there is lack of integration or if morbid elements are already present in the personality, grief may produce deviant behavior in the person.⁶⁰ Irion is certainly correct as far as he goes here. But he does not press on to say that which seems to

⁵⁶Paul Irion, The Funeral and the Mourners (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 26.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 31. ⁵⁸Ibid., p. 33. ⁵⁹Ibid., p. 41.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 33.

go even deeper into the nature of grief. It is not only that the role of the self is modified and that interpersonal relationships are left with a void, but that these relationships and this role have actually been incorporated as a vital part of the self. Since this is true, the loss of physical presence through death is first perceived as self loss, and this is far more threatening to the integrity of the self than a change of roles or disturbed relationships.

The process of mourning involves learning to live with memories of the deceased and with the affect connected with them, both positive and negative. Until the memories are called to mind and reviewed and the emotions expressed, the images will continue in a self-disruptive manner. Reviewing and expressing is done most effectively when they are done verbally with another person, providing catharsis, insight, and a supportive relationship.⁶¹

Among the dynamic forces at work in the grief reaction Irion lists fear, and this itself has several aspects.

First, is fear of death as such, and the word ontological is used to clarify what is meant, a "fear which has its roots in the very nature of man's being as a finite creature."⁶² Although various forms of expression

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 36-37. ⁶²Ibid., p. 48.

of this fear may be culturally conditioned, the fear itself is not.⁶³ It is a universal, pervasive fear which cannot be removed.⁶⁴ We can only seek to evade it or understand it. Evasion, however, is made difficult by the reality of the death of someone very close to us, an event which tends to personalize death and stimulate the fear of our own.⁶⁵

Another way in which fear is involved in grief has to do with the fear of the dead person. This is largely unconscious in our sophisticated age, but it can be seen demonstrated where there are feelings of guilt, and the bereaved appears to be attempting to placate the spirit of the dead through various acts of compensation.⁶⁶ It seems as if Irion might have sought to go further along this line of thought and put this concept on what seems to be a firmer psychological base. Rather than leaving the matter sounding as if there is some dread of the dead passed on to us by our primitive ancestors, it would seem as if a case could be made for this fear being simply what he gave one clue as its being, guilt, fear of one's own

⁶³Paul E. Irion, "In the Midst of Life...Death!" Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September, 1963), 8.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁵Irion, The Funeral and the Mourners, p. 48.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 49.

conscience, a clearly interpersonal aspect of the self, into which the emotionally significant dead person has been introjected and where he lives on in a threatening way for the bereaved. It is actually a part of himself that he fears, the living incorporation of the now physically dead person, the part of himself with which the dead person has become identified.

The third form of fear which is found in grief is the most common according to Irion, although it is difficult to see how it could be more common than ontological anxiety. We fear our own suffering and loneliness.⁶⁷

At this point Irion appears to contradict his earlier conclusion that grief is a term used to describe a complex of different emotions, for he says, "Let us turn our consideration now to feelings which are not integral parts of every instance of bereavement....,"⁶⁸ as if grief were actually the forms of fear which he has been discussing, and as if these feelings which follow "are not integral parts of every instance of bereavement, but which are very frequently seen in mourners."⁶⁹ These feelings of ambivalence (love - hate), hostility, and guilt are not at all minimized. They are extremely complicating factors and can even be dangerous to the mourner, but the implication is that they are not the grief itself. Issue should

⁶⁷Ibid. ⁶⁸Ibid. ⁶⁹Ibid.

be taken here only at the point of Irion's declaring that they are not universally found in bereavement. They may not be intense enough to cause complications in grief work, but it is difficult to see any close relationship without at least some ambivalence and guilt. Irion himself recognizes this later when he declares that "if we accept hostility in the broader sense, as a symbolic representation of the outgrowth of the frustrations which are found in all of life, we can accept the universality of the phenomenon."⁷⁰

He then goes on to make the retraction of his earlier view about the lack of universality of ambivalence and guilt practically complete by saying, "feelings of hostility are almost inevitably complicated by feelings of guilt."⁷¹ This is true because there are frustrations, disagreements, irritations in every intimate relationship. Normally, guilt is not experienced in most of these because there are always opportunities for reconciliation. But death brings these opportunities to an end, while the ambivalent feelings continue. Thus, without the chance for forgiveness, restitution, reconciliation, there is the growth of guilt. Unfortunately

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 52.

⁷¹Ibid.

some persons resort to self-punishing behavior in the attempt to assuage their intense guilt feelings.⁷² It is also possible that the tendency to idealize the deceased is a method of relieving guilt feelings.⁷³ Neither of these methods proves to be a constructive way to deal with guilt or to strengthen the self.

Irion makes a provocative suggestion by relating various grief reactions to Horney's conceptualization of the predominant interpersonal behavioral patterns which people exhibit: moving toward, against, and away from people. In the normal person where each of these reactions is called upon in appropriate situations, we might see something of a mixture of these in the reaction to grief. But in those persons where one pattern of response to persons clearly is dominant, we should be able to predict the predominant pattern of the grief reaction: dependence and a bid for sympathy, hostility and irritability, or withdrawal and isolation.

Edgar N. Jackson. Jackson's approach to a definition of grief is made in the following words:

(Grief) is essentially the emotional and related reactions that occur at the time of and following the loss by death of an important person in the emotional life of an individual who has reached the state of development where he has the capacity for object love. (It) is the emotion involved in the work of mourning,

⁷²Ibid., pp. 56-57. ⁷³Ibid., p. 57.

whereby a person seeks to disengage himself from the demanding relationship that has existed and to reinvest his emotional capital in new and productive directions for the health and welfare of his future life in society.⁷⁴

He continues to delineate the grief reaction by seeking to differentiate it from the emotional states that are similar to it. The first of these is anxiety. Grief has much of the same quality of threat to that which the individual perceives as being tied in with his own existence. However, he feels that grief differs in that "it is usually related to a specific fact of experience and therefore does not violate the reality sense...."⁷⁵

This distinction seems to overlook at this point, first, the unconscious factors which the external occasion of death arouse, and second, the fact that an eruption of an acute attack of anxiety may also occasionally be linked with "a specific fact of experience."

In regard to the first point, Jackson makes a distinction between normal and abnormal grief which seems to be based upon the assumption that there is a clearcut disjuncture between the two. He seems to be indicating that normal grief can be explained entirely by reference to the "objective" facts of the external situation and the

⁷⁴Edgar N. Jackson, Understanding Grief (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 18.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 19.

conscious motives and emotions of the person who grieves, while abnormal grief is the expression of "unconscious fears related to unresolved early experience."⁷⁶ At this point Jackson is following Freud too closely and uncritically, for this is precisely the distinction which Freud made between mourning and melancholia and which has already been elaborated and criticized.⁷⁷

It seems somewhat closer to human experience to place the concepts of "normal" and "abnormal" on a continuum, and admit that even a "normal" reaction has its unconscious elements and its references "to unresolved early experience," or at least to interpersonal experiences prior to the death which is the precipitating factor for the reaction. Even in "normal" grief there are elements of hostility and guilt that are not immediately conscious to the person grieving. Yet these remain within "normal" bounds because they are not so excessively intense that they are not amenable to "working through" by means of our usual institutions, rituals, and customs within a reasonable period of time.

In regard to the second point, we should remember that a key word in the definition of anxiety is perceived. That internal or external event which is perceived to be a threat to our being arouses the emotional pain which is the

⁷⁶Ibid. ⁷⁷See pp. 44-50.

warning signal to danger to the self, or anxiety. The death of someone with whom we have been linked emotionally is not necessarily a greater objective threat to our being than any one of a number of possible events. Thus, to say that grief has reference to "reality" while overt anxiety which is aroused by other internal or external events does not, simply is not accurate. Although some persons may experience an acute attack of anxiety and not be able to point to a precipitating event, sometimes they can, even though they may not be capable of giving an adequate explanation of why such an external event should set off so intense a reaction.

So it may be with grief. A person is aware of his feelings and the precipitating factor. But still the particular intense individual response is not adequately explained. The external event of death does not cause tears, because some in grief do not cry. Death does not cause hyperactivity, because many in grief react by physical retardation. Death does not cause expressions of self-recrimination, because many do not respond in this way.

Even in normal expressions of grief, unconscious factors are involved, and the particular responses of any given person are linked with earlier experiences which the person has learned to perceive as threats to his being and to which threats he has learned tendencies to respond in certain ways. Therefore, Jackson's conclusion that "normal

grief and anxiety are clearly different as they relate to the reality factor" and it is only in abnormal grief that "the loss may serve as a precipitating factor that releases unconscious fears related to unresolved early experience"⁷⁸ must be rejected. He himself recognizes this as at a later point he shows that the experience of personal loss triggers hitherto repressed emotions, those that root as far back as the preverbal period.⁷⁹

One can see how the early attitude toward a loved object, feelings of ambivalence in childhood, insecurities in child-parent relations, and fears related to insecurity might seriously affect the problems in working through acute grief.⁸⁰

Jackson also seeks to distinguish between grief and depression. Grief and depression are clearly not identical, although there are similarities of response on some cases, with depression as such frequently involved at least to some degree as a part of the grief reaction. Jackson is probably correct, however, in indicating that the loss of self-esteem which is so characteristic of depression should not be linked with depressive elements of grief, although he seems to go too far in excluding this factor entirely.⁸¹ Again he has followed Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia without adequate criticism. The major

⁷⁸Jackson, Understanding Grief, p. 19.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 30-31. ⁸⁰Ibid., p. 32.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 20.

point which is not made in this discussion is that anxiety itself is the source of depression. Jackson has said this without saying it. "For as anxiety proceeds from a sense of danger to the value structure of the individual, so the state of depression grows from a feeling of injury or dislocation to the narcissistic or self-regarding element of the personality."⁸² Such a clear distinction between these two intrapsychic sources as Jackson must feel that he is making is not obvious to this observer. Actually, any perceived threat by the individual to his psychic structure, or self, or style of life is experienced as anxiety. This perception of threat could hardly take place without involving that upon which he has placed value, for value is value because it is related to the sustaining of oneself as a person, which is the "self-regarding element of the personality." One direction in which anxiety may motivate the person is through attack, aggression, upon the source of the threat. But since that source is unconscious, the aggression is either displaced upon another object (the source of the hostility toward others in a number of the forms of the grief reaction) or upon one's self, the latter being experienced as depression (the source of depressive symptoms in much grief).

Jackson posits four dynamic factors which influence

⁸²Ibid.

the grief reaction. The first of these is the personality structure of the bereaved, indicating that where a morbid interpersonal relationship has led to a weak ego there is danger of an abnormal grief reaction. Second, social factors of crisis, support, and expectation affect the nature and intensity of grief. Third, the role which the deceased has played in the life system of an individual, and fourth, the value structure of the individual affect the dynamics of grief.

In the attempt to understand grief it is necessary to include the time dimensions of both past and future. The past has already been referred to, and will be again and again. Since grief is primarily the response of the individual to severe deprivation, it is necessary to look to that person's early life experiences to discover how he has learned to deal with deprivation, the degree of tolerance or intolerance which has been established. Much of this pattern of response has been developed even before the child has learned to talk and is "assimilated from the actions and attitudes of adults in the family constellation."⁸³ Later patterns of behavior are based upon the degree of security and self-esteem the child has come to know in relationship with his parents. He learns to know who he is and something of his value as a person by the

⁸³Ibid., p. 35

responses of his parents to him. Where these are loving and his needs are met consistently, security and self-esteem come into being. These are necessary for dealing effectively with mourning, whereas uncertainty and insecurity in relationships and a low sense of self-esteem resulting from lack of love and acceptance and inconsistent behavior on the part of parents make a person particularly "vulnerable to the strong emotions released by a major deprivation experience."⁸⁴

Not unrelated to the past experiences which have produced a particular personality and its tolerance for deprivation, but having something of a future dimension to it is the fact that one's response to the death of an emotionally related person cannot be completely understood "without taking into account the attitude of the bereaved toward his own eventual death."⁸⁵ The dynamics of one's understanding of his own finite nature are always involved.

What Jackson seems to be referring to in these sections is anxiety, although he does not use the word. Security and insecurity in relationships is simply another way of speaking of the level of basic anxiety which is produced in the person through his early relationships and life experiences. One's attitude toward one's own death involves a greater or lesser amount of what is termed

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 37. ⁸⁵Ibid., p. 35.

existential anxiety, the recognition of the reality of our own non-being. When he says that "affirmation, acceptance, and affection"⁸⁶ are the parental attitudes necessary for producing the types of personality which can do grief work effectively, it is another way of saying that these produce a person with a relatively low level of basic anxiety which is not raised to an unduly threatening level by loss. When the core of the grief feeling is described as a "feeling of acute pain,"⁸⁷ this is precisely the way the subjective experience of anxiety is described. The sine qua non of grief is not depression, or feelings of hostility, or other emotions and overt behavior that may accompany it, but it is this "feeling of acute pain" accompanying the loss of an object of value to us, thus an object which is related to our own selfhood. The core of the grief experience is anxiety. The relation to our own selfhood of the lost object and that which is so threatening as to cause the psychic pain which is anxiety is clarified by Jackson's discussion of identification in which he refers to the personal experience of the death of a significant person: "in your death something in me also dies."⁸⁸ This is expressed in a different way by the statement, "bereavement is an amputation of a part of the emotional structure of life..."⁸⁹

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 40. ⁸⁷Ibid., p. 47.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 60. ⁸⁹Ibid., p. 66.

This is literally true to the degree that we have incorporated the responses of another toward us as a part of our own being. Thus the pain felt is "the pain of separation."⁹⁰

As the process of identification has brought us to the place as persons where this statement at the time of loss could be made, it stands to reason that one method of coping with the sense of personal deprivation is by further identification with the deceased. And that, of course, is just exactly what is observed in the behavior of bereaved persons. The purpose is to seek to restore in oneself "the significance of the lost object."⁹¹

Another method of combating the pain of grief is by substitution, relating the internalized ties to the significant other to some new external object.⁹² Within limits this may facilitate grief work, but where the substitute becomes the center of one's total emotional investment, grief work is inhibited.

Jackson points to guilt as a "situational response that is almost universally present in grief...."⁹³ Only the emotionally inadequate may escape at least a small degree of this feeling. Guilt is unavoidable for most because of the "ambivalent nature of the love relationship."⁹⁴ The

⁹⁰Ibid. ⁹¹Ibid., p. 69. ⁹²Ibid., pp. 77 ff.

⁹³Ibid., p. 88. ⁹⁴Ibid.

stress of grief is so great that there is the tendency to regress to earlier levels of development, and this usually means to a level where the super-ego has greater dominance. The feelings of guilt may be based in actual neglect or wrongdoing or they may arise from unconscious sources not necessarily related to the relationship with the deceased, perhaps from an earlier emotionally significant relationship. In either case they are stimulated by the death of a person close to us and are complicated by regressive behavior. The tendency to idealize the deceased is one method of seeking to ease the pain of the guilt feelings.⁹⁵ Other attempts to assuage guilt are through self-punishment and efforts at compensation. More constructive are the open expression of the feelings, not only of the guilt, but of the ambivalence toward the dead person and/or the earlier significant person and the gradual movement out of the regressed condition.⁹⁶

An interesting contribution which Jackson makes to the understanding and handling of grief is the role of values, meaning, purpose, faith in human life. Man can be understood as a being who seeks for meaning and coherence in life experiences. Without them life crumbles, and the desire to live is weakened. This, in fact, is what frequently happens to a person when an emotionally significant

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 88-89. ⁹⁶Ibid., p. 101.

person dies. A symptom of grief is the sense of the loss of meaning. If a person has no clearly thought out value structure which transcends immediate gratification, and if he has no real awareness of a meaning in life, then the loss by death of a significant other is the loss of all meaning, and grief is intensified. On the other hand, if one's value structure and sense of life's meaning encompass present relations with others but also go beyond these, a person has resources which temper the real loss and genuine pain, and the death of these persons is not seen as the end of all meaning.⁹⁷

In answer to the question, "Why do we grieve?", three responses are made:

1. We grieve for ourselves. We are deprived, separated from someone to whom we have been emotionally related. There is the pain of helplessness.

2. Fear is a central emotion. Our world is suddenly changed and our own future is uncertain. In addition, childhood fears are awakened and cause us distress.

3. We feel insecure, also a condition whose original roots are in childhood.⁹⁸

The objective deprivation of bereavement has its subjective roots within the self structure, which could be pointed to as the source of the psychic pain. This is seen in the following:

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 114-21.

⁹⁸Edgar N. Jackson, You and Your Grief (New York: Channel Press, 1961), pp. 16-18.

Not only do we lose what we love and cherish, but we also feel that some important part of our own being has been taken away in the act.

...our sorrow is for a part of ourselves that seems to have been destroyed.⁹⁹

The first aspect of the response, then, is the unconscious fear of self-loss, self-disintegration. The second aspect of this anxiety is what Jackson calls sorrow. At the center of this is the personal loss of the other, so there is loneliness, but Jackson understands that we mourn for ourselves and the core of this experience is "a painful sadness at having to face life without the person we have known so long...."¹⁰⁰ It does not seem to be out of line to interpret this in terms of the fear of having to live life without the emotional interaction with the significant other and which is perceived by us as an emotional necessity for our lives.

The third aspect of the anxiety of grief is contained in words like this reaction of a woman at a funeral: "She is weeping now for herself, for an event she is sure will come, and for which she is trying to prepare herself."¹⁰¹ This is a statement of ontological or existential anxiety which is inevitably stimulated and rises above the level of consciousness by the death of someone close to us. "The

⁹⁹Edgar N. Jackson, For the Living (Des Moines: Channel Press, 1963), p. 22.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 23. ¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 21.

fear of our own death lurks relentlessly in the back of our minds, and facing the mystery of death always opens to us the gulf of the frightening unknown."¹⁰²

A fourth aspect of anxiety found within the grief situation is that of guilt.¹⁰³

III. SUMMARY

More than other observers, those within the field of pastoral care have linked the dying of an emotionally significant other with the subjective experience of the dying of part of one's own self, and have rather consistently pointed to this as the central feature of grief. Not only the perception of threat to the inner self but also the obvious disruption of a life style coincident with the disappearance of an interactional field is anxiety producing. Although several writers in some manner discuss the subject of anxiety in relation to grief, only Oates speaks of "the anxiety of grief." Also linked to the external event are reawakened childhood fears, the remembered pain of helplessness.

Rogers stated the kernel of the theory which this present work will seek to expand into a more complete theory, namely, the development of the self out of interaction with one's environment, including persons, and some of these

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 23. ¹⁰³Ibid., p. 25.

others, depending upon their meaning to the individual, become extensions of one's own personality. The most significant aspects of one's environment become literally a part of one's personality and can be removed only with pain and damage to the emotional life.

Since grief is an interpersonal event, a threat to the self, it is an event that can be prepared for. The early experiences of love and trust and learned self-esteem and the development of a readiness to respond to others produce a person who is less threatened by a disrupted relationship. Warm relations with a number of people who meet different needs also furnish an inner strength with which to confront bereavement.

While investigators in all fields have mentioned the complicating and practically universal factor of guilt feelings, several in the area of pastoral care have been more sensitive to the fears concerning one's own death which the death of a closely related person can stimulate. These fears perhaps are the source of the experience of loss of meaning which frequently accompanies bereavement. At this point is seen the constructive and therapeutic role of a value system and a concept of the meaning of life which transcends immediate gratification.

Thus are seen the three aspects of the anxiety which this present work postulates as being involved in every grief response: separation threatening self loss, guilt

or moral anxiety, and fear of one's own death, existential or ontological anxiety.

Attention is focused on the fact that it is not the external event, what has happened to the deceased, which defines grief, but what is happening to the bereaved, the inner, psychic or emotional events of the still living, but threatened person.

CHAPTER V

A CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPERSONAL INTERPRETATION OF FREUD'S CONCEPTS OF ANXIETY

Because this present work understands anxiety to be the core affect of grief, it is appropriate to attempt a meaningful statement of the nature of anxiety itself. It would be practically impossible here to seek to review even the several major approaches to such a definition. It would lead far away from the central purpose of this work, and, as a matter of fact, it has already been well done.¹ However, it does appear as if there are certain terms in which the meaning of anxiety can be expressed which shed light on the nature of grief. These terms, interpersonal in nature, are suggested by the frequent reference in the literature reviewed to the centrality in the event of bereavement of the loss of or separation from an emotionally significant person.

Freud must not be overlooked in such a discussion because of his historical significance, because of the insights contained within his theories themselves, and because a number of writers on the subject of grief have been dependent upon him. Even beyond these reasons, however, a

¹Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950).

study of the development of his ideas reveals a direction which, if followed, takes one beyond the literalistic, somatic basis of his theory into what would seem to be for the purpose of understanding grief the more productive conceptuality of interpersonal psychology. This direction has been suggested in at least some of the literature from all three approaches to grief: academic psychology and sociology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, and pastoral care.

A summary of Freud's first and second theories of anxiety would be superfluous. This, too, has already been quite adequately presented in other places.² What remains to be done is the presentation of the chronological development of his views concerning anxiety. Here will be seen not a smooth development of one theory with a similarly smooth transition from one to another, but rather in the midst of earlier statements will be found forerunners of a later position. Also, the attempt will be made to demonstrate that although Freud's theoretical position rests upon a somatic foundation, much of what he said had clear interpersonal implications. Not only are there these implications, but as a matter of fact, many of Freud's

²Seward Hiltner, "Some Theories of Anxiety: Psychiatric," Constructive Aspects of Anxiety, Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger, eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), pp. 33-50; May, op. cit.; Ishak Ramzy, "Freud's Understanding of Anxiety," Constructive Aspects of Anxiety, op. cit., pp. 15-29.

statements actually seem to have more meaning when they are interpreted in interpersonal terms. Particularly does his explication of anxiety, when understood as an expression of disturbed personal relationships, the fear of separation, lend itself to a meaningful description of grief in terms of anxiety.

Broadly, one sees three chronological stages in the development of Freud's concepts of anxiety:

Stage One - From his earliest psychodynamic writings through the full presentation of his first theory in Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, Freud's 1915-1917 lectures at the University of Vienna.

Stage Two - Period of Transition, 1917-1926, the time of Freud's transformation of his theory of personality, a number of the new concepts necessitating a revision of his statement of the origin and nature of anxiety.

Stage Three - From the publication of his systematic treatment of his second theory of anxiety, Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety, in 1926 to his last writings.

I. STAGE ONE: THE FIRST THEORY

Freud's organic basis for all personality dynamics, including anxiety, is portrayed clearly in one of his earliest papers. "The nervous system reacts to an internal source of excitation with a neurosis, just as it reacts to an analogous external one with corresponding affect."³

This affect is described as originating in sexual

³Sigmund Freud, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works (New York: Macmillan, 1961), III, 112.

excitation and as being a painful one: "...it was the subject's sexual life that had given rise to a distressing affect of precisely the same quality as that attaching to his obsession."⁴ The fragments of the concept of the origin and role of anxiety can be put together in the following manner: sexual excitation arises; satisfaction cannot be attained; the excessive energy is experienced as painful; repression of affect takes place, and to reduce the painful experience it attaches itself to other ideas; the other ideas, with the new strength of affect, become neurotic, obsessional.

Freud defines anxiety neurosis in terms of a syndrome whose nuclear psychic symptom is "anxious expectation" or "apprehension,"⁵ and "anxiety in a freely floating state."⁶ The emphasis on "expectation" points to the future-oriented nature of anxiety as well as to its past roots, an emphasis which will not be fully incorporated and developed until the publication of his second theory twenty-two years later.

Anxiousness, though remaining frequently below the level of consciousness, can also "break through" into awareness, either "alone, without any associated idea, or accompanied by the interpretation that is nearest to hand,

⁴Ibid., III, 52. ⁵Ibid., III, 92-93.

⁶Ibid., III, 93.

such as ideas of the extinction of life," or others.⁷ These attacks are accompanied by the disturbance of any combination of various "bodily functions - such as respiration, heart action, vaso-motor innervation or glandular activity."⁸

His theory is that there is an accumulation of excitation, a raising of the level of tension, which is sexual and somatic in nature, and that this excitation is deflected from the psychic area, being employed in an abnormal manner, resulting in a decreased feeling of psychic sexual desire.⁹ It is significant that he stresses "that the anxiety...can be traced to no psychical origin."¹⁰

Freud has here laid the foundation for the somatic origin of all conflicts, for all disturbances to the self. That these physiological drives attached themselves to external objects and therefore had interpersonal repercussions, Freud made clear, but he was never able to explicate fully the meaning of interpersonal relations because of his somatic starting point. He undoubtedly did find disturbed sexual relationships in neurotic patients, but he chose to emphasize the etiological significance of unfulfilled, and therefore, for him, accumulated, excessive somatic

⁷Ibid., III, 93-94. ⁸Ibid., III, 94.

⁹Ibid., III, 107-108.

¹⁰Ibid., III, 107. (Freud's own emphasis.)

sexual excitation, rather than the primacy of the disturbed interpersonal relationship, which would then naturally express itself in the inability of a person to make a full and adequate sexual adjustment.

As to anxiety,

The psyche finds itself in the affect of anxiety if it feels unable to deal by appropriate reaction with a task (a danger) approaching from outside; it finds itself in the neurosis of anxiety if it finds that it is unable to even out the (sexual) excitation originating from within - that is to say, it behaves as though it were projecting that excitation outward.¹¹

In other words, the response of anxiety which is aroused by an internal situation with which the individual cannot cope is similar in quality to the response of fear to a specific external threat. Apart from the source of conflict's being in sexual excitation, the valid insight is that a determinative factor in the arousal of anxiety is one's perception of his own ability to cope with a stressful situation. One's self-evaluation is a factor, a self-image which is to be indicated in this present paper as having its origin in the attitudes of the significant others toward the person early in his life, an interpersonal origin. Freud's insight here is an important one, yet it is difficult to see how this self-evaluative factor fits in with the concept of anxiety which he was presenting at that time. In the article, "Obsessions and Phobias," Freud

¹¹Ibid., III, 112.

added the dimension of the past to the future-directed nature of anxiety which was contained in the term "anxious expectation", fearing that something in the future is threatening. In discussing phobias, he has said that the emotional state is one of anxiety, and that

we often find the recollection of an anxiety attack; and what the patient actually fears is the occurrence of such an attack under the special conditions in which he believes he cannot escape it.¹²

As was indicated in regard to the concept of "anxious expectation", this reference to "recollection" points to a concept involved quite clearly in Freud's second, and much later, theory of anxiety. Here it does not seem compatible with the definition of anxiety as an automatic internal response to a high level of sexual excitation. Rather, despite the limits of this definition, he cannot help but allow incompatible insights to creep in, and the two temporal dimensions he has referred to could be united and the statement made that anxiety is the anticipation of or apprehension concerning the possible repetition of an unpleasant or painful emotion, an earlier form of which has already been experienced.

It seems something of a regression when we find Freud later turning his back on such a potentially productive set of insights concerning the "recollection-appre-

¹²Ibid., III, 81.

hension" dimension of anxiety and focusing upon the simple experience of sexual excitation which has been detached from its object:

neurotic anxiety is derived from sexual life and corresponds to libido which has been diverted from its purpose and found no employment. Since then this formula has met the test of time; and it enables us now to infer from it that anxiety-dreams are dreams with a sexual content, the libido belonging to which has been transformed into anxiety.¹³

In other words, anxiety is merely an unpleasant mental experience with certain physiological accompaniments which takes place when sexual excitation does not find direct fulfillment or substitute employment. When it does attach itself to a substitute object, there is the separation of the affect from the original sexual idea, the idea first being repressed, the affect continuing as anxiety until it finds a substitute object.

A most revealing passage seems to point clearly to the interpersonal nature of anxiety, but Freud, by virtue of his commitment to the sexual and somatic origin of the excitation, is not free to develop it fully. "Children themselves behave from an early age as though their dependence on the people looking after them were in the nature of sexual love."¹⁴ The point here is not to take up the battle against sexual overtones in the relationships which children have, but it is to place the central emphasis on

¹³Ibid., IV, 161-62. ¹⁴Ibid., VII, 224.

the relationship as such as being of primary importance to the individuals involved. Therefore, that which is most highly motivating is the goal of nourishing and sustaining the relationship through which the self of the child is being created and maintained, not the merely reduction of the posited increase in somatic, sexual tension. The important fact in the quoted statement above is, "their dependence on the people looking after them." This is the insight that is logically linked with the very next sentence in the passage: "Anxiety in children is originally nothing other than an expression of the fact that they are feeling the loss of the person they love."¹⁵ The anxiety is the fear that they are losing, are separated from, the person upon whom they have learned to be dependent for their own existence as persons. "They are afraid in the dark because in the dark they cannot see the person they love; and their fear is soothed if they can take hold of that person's hand in the dark."¹⁶ For the child the proof of the security of the relationship upon which he is dependent must be more tangible than simply an inner conviction. No matter how reliable and consistent the parents have been in meeting his needs, so long as he is really dependent upon them for sustenance, protection, and comfort, as well as his emotional needs, concrete expressions of the relationship remain

¹⁵Ibid., VII. ¹⁶Ibid., VII, 224.

an absolute necessity, and for the child there is no substitute for this. Indeed, even for the mature person, an inner conviction of the security of a relationship of love without the physical presence of the other and specific expressions of love has its limits, although these limits may have a great elasticity about them.

The child has not yet learned that dependability on the part of the other tends to guarantee dependability for the future. He has not yet learned to substitute the thought, the image, of the other for the actual presence of the needed one. Seeing the other, hearing the other, feeling the body of the other, is the only assurance of the reality of the significant person. Darkness, which blots out sight, is the equivalent of the loss of, separation from, the person who is needed.

Freud illustrated this point with the story of a three year old boy whom he heard calling out of a dark room: "Auntie, speak to me! I'm frightened because it's so dark." The aunt answered: "What good would that do? You can't see me." He replied: "That doesn't matter. If someone speaks, it gets light."¹⁷ Freud interpreted the story:

Thus what he was afraid of was not the dark but the absence of someone he loved; and he could feel sure of being soothed as soon as he had evidence of that

¹⁷Ibid., VII.

person's presence.¹⁸

It is separation from the emotionally significant person, separation in and of itself, that forms the threat to the self and which is experienced as anxiety, not merely the experience of an accumulation of ungratified sexual drive, because the existence of the self is dependent upon the existence of the relationship with the other. To say, as Freud does, that there is excessive sexual instinct (libido) created by separation and the child turns "his libido into anxiety when he cannot satisfy it"¹⁹ leaves too many questions unanswered. Why is excess libido turned into anxiety? What is the threat? If the answer be "disintegration of the ego in the face of overwhelming libidinal drive," precisely how has the ego come to have such a characteristic of perceiving strong drive as threat to its existence? How is repressed libido transformed from sexual desire into the experience of fear?

A summary of the sequence of the mental events which lead to repression is given in Freud's lectures at Clark University in 1909.

A wish emerges which is in opposition to other desires of the individual. Basically the wish is not able to be reconciled to "the ethical and aesthetic standards of his personality."²⁰ Here it seems that Freud failed to

¹⁸Ibid., VII. ¹⁹Ibid., VII. ²⁰Ibid., XI, 24.

take into consideration and articulate the social nature of these aspects of the personality, the fact that ethical and aesthetic standards are learned in interpersonal situations and are the results of introjection of and identification with significant aspects of the emotionally meaningful persons. Thus, wishes in opposition to these standards are perceived as threatening to the "interpersonal integrity" of the self, being understood as the equivalent of separation from the significant other.²¹

Mental pain is experienced. "An acceptance of the incompatible wishful impulse or a prolongation of the conflict would have produced a high degree of unpleasure...."²²

The pain is avoided by repression, the pushing of the wish or the conflict and its attached memories out of consciousness.²³

Finally, the affect of the repressed idea is transformed into anxiety.²⁴

In this sequence it is clear that anxiety does not come into being until after repression takes place, and is nothing more than the apparently magically transformed affect of the repressed wish.

In 1909 Freud made his first clear reference to the relationship between birth and anxiety which was to come in

²¹Ibid., XI. ²²Ibid., XI. ²³Ibid., XI.

²⁴Ibid., XI, 37.

for a much fuller and more systematic elaboration later by adding a footnote in The Interpretation of Dreams which stated: "Moreover, the act of birth is the first experience of anxiety, and thus the source and prototype of the affect of anxiety."²⁵

The next year he wrote:

Birth is both the first of all dangers to life and the prototype of all the later ones that cause us to feel anxiety, and the experience of birth has probably left behind in us the expression of affect which we call anxiety.²⁶

This is one of many examples of how the active mind of Freud was continually getting ahead of itself. It is amazing that he should have made this reference to the relation of birth and anxiety at this time, since in his theory of anxiety he had not yet clearly described anxiety as response to danger, although he had seen some link between the two. At any rate, birth as a danger which is the prototype of other experiences of danger in which the organism feels anxiety is beyond, and indeed does not fit into, the theory of anxiety which he had expressed up until this time. Also, the possibilities of birth as a powerful symbol of the meaning of anxiety have not yet arisen. Yet here are the roots of it.

This first theory of anxiety of Freud is referred

²⁵Ibid., V, 400-01. ²⁶Ibid., XI, 173.

to in several other places,²⁷ but finds its first, last, and only full and systematic treatment in his lectures delivered at the University of Vienna during the two academic terms covering the years 1915-1917, with publication completed in 1917.

Here Freud used the term "realistic anxiety" (other translations use the word "objective") in contrast with "neurotic anxiety". This is simply fear, "a reaction to the perception of an external danger - that is, of an injury which is expected and foreseen."²⁸ This attitude of expectation, or anticipation, has been mentioned before briefly in connection with anxiety neurosis, and it was pointed out that this future-dimension plays a significant role in Freud's second theory of anxiety. It is important to note at this point, however, that he shows that the occasions for this type of anxiety are dependent upon (1) "the state of a person's knowledge," his prior experiences and learning with regard to what in the external world constitutes a danger to him, and (2) "on his sense of power vis-a'-vis the external world."²⁹ It is not out of line to mention here, as Freud did not, the relevance of these two determinants to what we refer to today as anxiety, what Freud called neurotic anxiety, or Angst, which "relates to

²⁷Ibid., XIII, 155-57; 182-84. ²⁸Ibid., XVI, 394.

²⁹Ibid., XVI.

the state and disregards the object...."³⁰

Anxiety (neurotic anxiety) and fear (realistic anxiety) are linked together by the source in a situation of danger, the one internal and the other external.

At the core of the affect of anxiety there appears to be the repetition of an earlier, significant, and universal experience, "the precipitate of a reminiscence."³¹ This earlier experience is birth, for it is in that event

that there comes about the combination of unpleasurable feelings, impulses of discharge and bodily sensations which has become the prototype of the effects of a mortal danger and has ever since been repeated by us as the state of anxiety.³²

There is a deep insight in this reference to the past-dimension, as if one was being threatened at the very core of his existence. Freud will make much more of this later, but it is difficult to see how it relates directly to his present (1917) concept of anxiety as the transformation of repressed libido.

Also difficult to understand in relation to this first theory of anxiety, but containing the very heart of the meaning of anxiety as the fear of separation from or loss of the significant other, and fitting beautifully as a symbol into the conceptuality provided by the interpersonal context of the development of the self, and thus its basic

³⁰Ibid., XVI, 395. ³¹Ibid., XVI, 396.

³²Ibid., XVI.

interpersonal nature, is Freud's further statement: "We shall also recognize it as highly relevant that this first state of anxiety arose out of separation from the mother!"³³

Freud sought to answer the question of what does one fear in anxiety by reference to frustrated sexual excitation. "In such circumstances the libidinal excitation vanishes and anxiety appears in its place...."³⁴ His conclusion was that anxiety is merely "an accumulation of libido which is kept away from its normal employment, and...that here we are entirely in the sphere of somatic processes."³⁵

But what is there in the repressed libido, the frustrated sexual expression, these "somatic processes", to be afraid of? What is the relationship of this to realistic anxiety? "The generation of anxiety (Furcht) is the ego's reaction to danger and the signal for taking flight."³⁶ Therefore, in Angst the ego must be understood as "making a similar attempt at flight from the demand of its libido, ...treating this internal danger as though it were an external one."³⁷ But the question remains, why should libidinal demands be treated as if they were of the same threatening character as external danger?

He recognized the difficulty of his position in

³³Ibid., XVI, 397. ³⁴Ibid., XVI, 401-02.

³⁵Ibid., XVI, 403. ³⁶Ibid., XVI, 405.

³⁷Ibid., XVI.

stating on the one hand that anxiety is the transformed affective energy of libidinal wishes and on the other that it is the ego's attempt at flight from the internal danger of the demands of the libido. This situation still does not have reference to external danger.

To deal with his difficulty, Freud referred back to childhood fear when the mother is not present, which he interpreted as being the increase of libido without the presence of the object upon which it can be fixed, with its consequent discharge as anxiety.

And it can scarcely be a matter of chance, either, that in this situation which is the prototype of anxiety in children there is a repetition of the determinant of the first state of anxiety during the act of birth - namely, separation from the mother.³⁸

The external dangerous referent to the situation in which libido accumulates is the literal separation from the mother at birth. Therefore, since separation from the mother is the occasion upon which libido cannot be discharged upon its object, the resultant reaction is the same as that of the earlier experience, anxiety.

However, let us clearly understand at this point, it is not basically an interpersonal situation that Freud has been describing as the cause of anxiety, but the condition of physical separation is merely the occasion when libido accumulates, and this internal energy is "transformed into

³⁸Ibid., XVI, 407.

anxiety,"³⁹ or "it would be better to say discharge(d) in the form of anxiety...."⁴⁰ For later in life all undischarged libido takes on the nature of this same affect. Shifting Freud's emphasis, it could be stated that the real threat to a person is the loss of the sustaining presence, physically, and to an even greater degree, emotionally, of a person perceived as necessary to one's own existence, and undischarged libido merely being the stimulus to that painful memory, or the making present of the past threat. Or, as Freud said, going at it from the other direction, the past painful experience is made present by the person's "regression to the infantile phobia."⁴¹

II. STAGE TWO: THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Following the publication of the systematic work just referred to (1917), where Freud's first theory of anxiety was presented in its most complete form, we move into a period of transition prior to the statement of the second theory. This is not to imply that Freud's position had been static up until now. It has been shown that new elements continued to find their way into his statement of anxiety, a number of these difficult to resolve with his earlier assumptions and actually foreshadowing his second

³⁹Ibid., XVI, 409. ⁴⁰Ibid., XVI, 410.

⁴¹Ibid., XVI, 409.

theory. However, in this period from 1917 until 1925, Freud published a formulation of his changing concepts of personality, including a few references to anxiety, which provided him with the conceptual framework for the statement of a different theory of the nature of anxiety, one which lends itself much more readily to an interpersonal interpretation, although Freud never completely broke with his grounding of personality dynamics, motivation, in somatic processes, of which the instincts were mental representations.

In 1920, discussing the concept of pain, Freud made a statement which was to form the foundation stone of the later approach to anxiety.

Most of the unpleasure we experience is perceptual unpleasure. It may be perception of pressure by unsatisfied instincts; or it may be external perception which is either distressing in itself or which excites unpleasurable expectations in the mental apparatus - that is, which is recognized by it as a "danger".⁴²

This painful anticipation can only be perceived as such by what Freud has come to call the ego. Anxiety is "a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one."⁴³

A year later (1921), he expressed a dual causation involved in the intensity of anxiety. "Fear in an individual is provoked either by the greatness of the danger or

⁴²Ibid., XVIII, 11. ⁴³Ibid., XVIII, 12.

by the cessation of emotional ties...; the later is the case of neurotic fear or anxiety."⁴⁴ Here is seen the continued emphasis on the concept of separation from the object of one's libidinal drives as being the occasion (but not directly the cause) of the arousal of anxiety. But it seems to be clear that there has been through the years a tendency on the part of Freud to stress that anxiety basically is a separation fear.

The year 1923 saw a dividing line drawn in psycho-analytic theory by the full and organized statement of Freud's topology of the personality. A new dimension was added to the conception of the interacting energies of psychic life, and the idea of anxiety could now clearly be stated in a new way.

The ego "is a coherent organization of mental processes...."⁴⁵ Consciousness is attached to it, although a part of it may be unconscious, and since it is capable of perceiving internal as well as external dangers, it plays a key role in the origin of repression.⁴⁶ One differentiation within the ego is the super-ego, largely unconscious, which comes into being through the identification of the child with the parent of the same sex in his attempt to deal with the strong primitive forces of the Oedipal

⁴⁴Ibid., XVIII, 97. ⁴⁵Ibid., XIX, 17.

⁴⁶Ibid., XIX, 17, 18, 21.

situation.⁴⁷

Therefore the ego is seen as

owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego. Three kinds of anxiety correspond to these three dangers, since anxiety is the expression of a retreat from danger.... The ego is the actual seat of anxiety.... What it is the ego fears from the external and from the libidinal dangers cannot be specified; we know that the fear is of being overwhelmed or annihilated.... The ego is simply obeying the warning of the pleasure principle.⁴⁸

Here Freud states the following order of progression: the ego perceives danger; anxiety is the expression of recoil from it; the pleasure-pain principle calls the ego into operation to repress that which it perceives to be the source of danger. This order is clearly different from his previously stated theory in that repression now follows anxiety rather than preceeding it. Therefore, anxiety can no longer be conceived of as being the transformation of repressed libido.

The precise dangers are not yet specified, but a key idea expressed is that the ego fears being annihilated. And earlier it has been made clear that the occasion is separation from the mother and other significant persons. But why should this separation be so feared? Simply because somatically originated libidinal tension accumulates? This does not seem to be a meaningful account. Is not the

⁴⁷Ibid., XIX, 31-32. ⁴⁸Ibid., XIX, 56-57.

heart of the matter the fact that the ego understands its own existence as dependent upon union with emotionally significant other persons, that having come into being in interpersonal interaction, it cannot survive apart from relationships with others? In the infant and very young child, this relationship is real only with the assured physical presence of the other, and only gradually does he come to learn that separation, physical absence, does not necessarily mean the destruction of the needed relationship. Yet even when this lesson is learned, there remains the residue of the first interpersonal situation in which presence equaled relationship and thus the security of one's own existence. From time to time in life, in disrupted meaningful relations, the old fear is intensely aroused and one's own self is seen as being in danger of being annihilated.

Freud elaborated somewhat on moral anxiety, for he felt that he had the clue to the ego's fear of the super-ego.

The superior being, which turned into the ego ideal, once threatened castration, and this dread of castration is probably the nucleus round which the subsequent fear of conscience has gathered; it is this dread that persists as the fear of conscience.⁴⁹

But what is this other than a separation fear, of which castration could be thought of as a symbol, the loss of the object which is the means of union with the signifi-

⁴⁹Ibid., XIX, 57.

cant one? The basic anxiety is, and Freud actually stated it here, "the anxiety due to separation from the protecting mother."⁵⁰ This statement ought to be left to say what it says without reference to the concept of instinctual drives which add nothing to its meaning.

The fear of death, rather than being an instinctual source of all anxiety, is simply derived from the fear of super-ego as described above. It is the ego's giving "itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the super-ego, instead of loved!"⁵¹ Under conditions of excessive danger there arise internal situations analogous to "the first great anxiety - states of birth...."⁵² The fear of death is therefore to be regarded, "like the fear of conscience, as a development of the fear of castration."⁵³ The fear, of course, is the fear of the destruction of one's own self.

III. STAGE THREE: THE SECOND THEORY

The ideas which Freud stated rather briefly in this last work in 1924 are elaborated systematically and completely two years later.

Anxiety is "a special state of unpleasure with acts of discharge along particular paths."⁵⁴ It is something

⁵⁰Ibid., XIX, 58. ⁵¹Ibid., XIX. ⁵²Ibid., XIX.

⁵³Ibid., XIX. ⁵⁴Ibid., XX, 133.

felt. It is nothing more nor less than a signal given by the ego in a situation of danger (or one interpreted as a danger) for the purpose of influencing the pleasure-pain mechanism.

There are two occasions for the arousal of anxiety:

the case in which something occurs in the id which activates one of the danger-situations for the ego and induces the latter to give the anxiety-signal for inhibitions to take place, and the case in which a situation analogous to the trauma of birth is established in the id and an automatic reaction of anxiety ensues.⁵⁵

Again it is noted that the ego employs the same measures of defense against an internal danger as it does against an external one. Confronted with an external danger, the organism has learned to seek flight, or even to avoid the area or situation of danger. When an internal condition is aroused, something similar takes place: repression.

Repression is an equivalent of this attempt at flight. The ego withdraws its (preconscious) cathexis from the instinctual representative that is to be repressed and uses that cathexis for the purpose of releasing unpleasure (anxiety).... (The) ego is the actual seat of anxiety and (we may) give up our earlier view that the cathectic energy of the repressed impulse is automatically turned into anxiety. If I expressed myself earlier in the latter sense, I was giving a phenomenological description and not a metapsychological account of what was occurring.⁵⁶

The description of the observation of anxiety following repression is true, but not causal in that sequence,

⁵⁵Ibid., XX, 140-41. ⁵⁶Ibid., XX, 92-93.

and Freud admitted that even when he held to the earlier view that he found it impossible to explain how the transformation of repressed libido into anxiety was carried out.⁵⁷

A question of major significance is, of course, related to the original source of anxiety in each human life. Freud explained this by reference to the past-dimension in the life of every person. "Affective states have become incorporated in the mind as precipitates of primaeval traumatic experiences, and when a similar situation occurs they are revived like mnemic symbols."⁵⁸ Thus, anxiety is not created anew with each specific danger situation, making it necessary for the person to learn of the danger right within the given situation itself, but "it is reproduced as an affective state in accordance with an already existing mnemic image."⁵⁹

What is the origin of the memory picture which carries with it the affect of anxiety as a danger signal? Freud's answer: the act of birth. The assumption is that this was the historical experience which contained within it "the necessary conditions for such an increase of excitation and discharge along particular paths" which are characteristic of anxiety, and contemporary anxiety is the repro-

⁵⁷Ibid., XX, 109. ⁵⁸Ibid., XX, 93.

⁵⁹Ibid., XX, 109.

duction of that trauma.⁶⁰ Anxiety will regularly arise when a similar situation occurs. The central feature of that event is separation from the mother and the flood of intense stimuli which the infant alone is incapable of coping with, a condition which is perceived as overwhelming, threatening annihilation. In other words, the origin of anxiety is in the pain of an original dangerous situation "and it is reproduced whenever a state of that kind recurs."⁶¹

After having said this, Freud went on to make some statements which seem to lend themselves readily to the concept of anxiety as being separation fear, the fear of being separated from the emotionally necessary person, of which situation the separation of birth is merely a symbol, although birth does actually involve danger to life. But since there is not yet a developed psychic life of the infant, psychologically birth means nothing.

We cannot possibly suppose that the foetus has any sort of knowledge that there is a possibility of its life being destroyed. It can only be aware of some vast disturbance in the economy of its narcissistic libido.⁶²

But even in this regard Freud indicated the difficulty of specifying the elements which will be the sign of all future danger. In reference to his elaboration of the

⁶⁰Ibid., XX, 133. ⁶¹Ibid., XX, 134.

⁶²Ibid., XX, 135.

traumatic nature of birth, he said honestly, "I cannot even vouch for the validity of the description I have just given."⁶³ His conclusion was "that the earliest phobias of infancy cannot be directly traced back to impressions of the act of birth...."⁶⁴ There is in the infant a preparedness for anxiety, but this emerges only with gradual mental development.

According to the interpersonal theory of the development of the self, which is to be proposed in the next chapter, the mental development Freud spoke of takes place in an interpersonal setting, with the infant's learning to distinguish himself from the external world while at the same time learning to conceive of himself in the same terms as he perceives the relational meaning of the responses of the significant other(s) toward him. Thus learning to know himself as one who does not exist apart from others, that which is clearly most threatening to his existence is separation from those upon whom he is dependent. This is demonstrated by the fact that the infant and small child show no fear of those situations which could literally destroy him physically, but will frequently show fear and even panic when his mother leaves the room.

Freud actually seemed to be saying this here. After all of his discussion of birth, its only validity now seems

⁶³Ibid., XX. ⁶⁴Ibid., XX, 136. (Emphasis mine.)

to be that of a dramatic symbol of separation. He also verified what the interpersonal theory states about the origin of childhood fears.

They occur...when a child is alone, or in the dark, or when it finds itself with an unknown person instead of the one to whom it is used - such as its mother. These three instances can be reduced to a single condition - namely, that of missing someone who is loved and longed for.⁶⁵

This is the key to the understanding of anxiety, according to Freud. He did, then, go on to relate the concept of separation to a physiological condition, which, of course, is always involved in the increased tension which is experienced painfully as anxiety.

The infant longs for the sight of his mother because he has already learned that she gratifies all of his needs as quickly as possible after they arise.

The situation, then, which (the infant) regards as a 'danger' and against which it wants to be safe-guarded is that of non-satisfaction, of a growing tension due to need, against which it is helpless.⁶⁶

So any situation in which stimuli reach an unpleasant magnitude, in which the individual feels powerless to provide for the discharge of intense psychic tension represents a situation "analogous to the experience of being born,"⁶⁷ a repetition of the danger situation. Note that he said "analogous to" the birth situation, and the way in which it is analogous is not simply the flood of

⁶⁵Ibid., XX. ⁶⁶Ibid., XX, 137. ⁶⁷Ibid., XX.

intense stimuli at birth, since these were stated as being psychologically meaningless, but it is analogous in that it involves a separation from the mother, or the perception of any internal condition or external situation which threatens one's relationship with a significant other. ⁶⁸

The reaction of anxiety then appears, a product of the psychic helplessness of the infant, the counterpart of which is found in his physiological helplessness.⁶⁹ This sense of psychic helplessness is later reproduced wherever there is the loss or threatened loss of the object in which libido has been invested, or to put it another way, in broken or disrupted meaningful interpersonal relationship. The true significance of any danger situation is the estimation of our strength in comparison with the magnitude of the danger, but the person has learned as an infant that he has little strength with which to cope with the situation of separation from its mother, and that separation from the needed object is intense danger to the self, thus eliciting the response of anxiety as a signal for the avoidance of danger.

A transformation of infantile anxiety occurs during the phallic stage, castration anxiety, also a separation anxiety,⁷⁰ and also capable of serving as a symbol of that

⁶⁸Ibid., XX, 137-38. ⁶⁹Ibid., XX, 138.

⁷⁰Ibid., XX.

which the child really fears to lose, his mother. A high narcissistic value is attached to the penis. Why? Not as a "thing-in-itself", but because its possession is conceived of as a guarantee of reunion with the mother. Deprivation of it equals psychologically the second separation from the mother, "being helplessly exposed to an unpleasurable tension due to instinctual need...."⁷¹

Anxiety may still arise out of the increase of sexual tension, as Freud stated in his original theory. However, it is not a mysterious, unexplained transformation of libido, but the fear arising out of a perceived state of helplessness which was learned as an infant in the face of the absence of the mother. Nor is the "instinctual demand dangerous in itself; it only becomes so inasmuch as it entails a real external danger, the danger of castration."⁷²

But the even more important question is, what is the true external danger of which castration is powerful symbol or toward which it points. Freud has himself already given the answer: the loss of the loved object, the mother, for the real meaning of castration is in not allowing a person a means of union with the emotionally significant person whom he needs for maintaining the fullness and integrity of his own self.

Actually there is in this schema merely the sub-

⁷¹Ibid., XX, 139. ⁷²Ibid., XX, 126.

stituting of one external danger for another.⁷³ However, later on Freud felt the need to reemphasize the fact that the external danger (castration) would not exist, or more to the heart of it, "the loved person would not cease to love us...if we did not entertain certain feelings and intentions within us."⁷⁴ The instinctual impulses are the necessary precondition for the existence of the external danger of separation, and therefore, Freud felt, ought to be considered dangerous in themselves.

This conclusion seems to be a non sequitur. The fact remains that the actual danger is the loss of the needed person, of which castration is either the real prior threat or the symbol, depending upon one's interpretation. The fact that one may have learned as an infant that separation from the mother is accompanied by an increase of libido does not mean that this heightened state of tension caused the loss, or that now what is perceived internally as a threat to the self as a result of this residue of infantile parataxic reasoning is in reality a danger.

To move to the interpersonal equivalent of this situation, the infant's learning has been that he is totally dependent upon the mothering one, not only literally in a physical way, but also, as indicated earlier, for the in-

⁷³Ibid., XX. ⁷⁴Ibid., XX, 145.

tegrity, the existence of the self as a psychological reality. A prime motivation for the individual is to maintain and enhance the unity, integrity, and efficient functioning of this self which is interpersonal in nature. Any threat to relationship calls up the response which was the infant's reaction to the absence of the mother, fear and panic. But it would be foolish to say that this internal desire to maintain the self was danger, although it is the obvious precondition for the danger. If the person did not have this internal demand, then the disruption of external relationship would not threaten him. It is the external loss which is perceived as threatening because it is understood as meaning self-loss, the breakdown of the self, because the person has learned as an infant the response of helplessness to separation from the mothering one. The internal demand is not the danger, and is not perceived as the danger. The reality of separation from an emotionally significant person is perceived as the danger, because the individual has learned that the coherence of his own self is dependent upon the relationship with the other. Yet, in the final analysis, even this external broken relationship is not the ultimate danger. The ultimate danger is the actual breakdown of the self. But the maintenance of the self, the individual must learn, is not made impossible by separation. He must move beyond the helplessness he originally learned in the face of the

absence of the mothering one to the realization that the significant aspects of the other have now been introjected. The other is living as a part of the self, and even absence, broken relationship, death, while painful and involving an element of emotional impoverishment until other relationships are established, do not mean the death of the self which has been related to the other.

In Freud's analysis of anxiety, only one other relationship needs to be pointed out, that with regard to expectation. The dimension of the past (early experience, learning) has been described by reference to the event of birth and the Oedipal situation. Now it remains to show that it is not just remembering something in the past that is so painful. Anxiety is the fear that something will happen in the future. "The signal (of anxiety) announced: 'I am expecting a situation of helplessness to set in.'"⁷⁵

Anxiety is both the remembering of the past painful situation and the anticipation that that pain will be repeated.

A danger-situation is a recognized, remembered, expected situation of helplessness. Anxiety is the original reaction to helplessness in the trauma and is reproduced later on in the danger-situation as a signal for help.⁷⁶

The purpose of the arousal of the anticipated pain is, of course, so that the greatest pain itself, loss of

⁷⁵Ibid., XX, 145. ⁷⁶Ibid., XX, 166-67.

the other, annihilation of the self, might be avoided by adjustive patterns of behavior.

After 1926 there seemed to be little fundamental change in Freud's conceptualization of anxiety. He did clarify one point already discussed by saying that the internal instinctual danger is only a half-way house to the real external danger. The birth experience is the prototype of this danger and the fear of castration is central, but he seemed to be saying that the meaning is the fear of the loss of love. He emphasized that every stage of development has its own particular conditions for anxiety, but the meaning remains the same. As development proceeds, the older conditions for the arousal of anxiety should disappear as the danger situations lose their force through the strengthening of the ego. In actual life, however, this happens only incompletely, and the ego continues to perceive separation as a threat to its existence.

IV. A CRITICAL EVALUATION

Freud frankly staked the validity of his whole theory upon the organic, somatic origin of all increases of tension which provide the energy for human behavior. It has been pointed out that one man who was highly influential in his life was Brucke, who operated upon the principle "that no forces other than the physical, chemical

ones are active within the organism."⁷⁷ And Freud's first theory of anxiety reflected this principle clearly; somatic, sexual excitation is frustrated in its expression, its ideational content is unacceptable and is therefore repressed, but since energy cannot be destroyed, the affect became transformed and was physiologically discharged as anxiety.

However, it was shown that Freud was so keen an observer he began to note other factors which were related to anxiety: the relationship of anxiety to a situation of internal danger comparable to external danger; the reference back to the past learning experience, of which birth was the prototype; the reference to the future as the element of expectation in anxiety was seen; the centrality of the concept of separation from the mother; the sense of helplessness which is involved. It was with great difficulty that Freud labored to get these concepts into harmonious relationship with his first theory. Of course, it is to his credit that he had the openness to allow these and other observations to lead him to a reformulation which was drastically different. In this new statement it was absolutely necessary to give up certain aspects of the somatic nature of anxiety. By so doing Freud was freed to portray more clearly the interpersonal aspects of the situation. However, still being committed to the somatic

⁷⁷Ramzy, op. cit., p. 16.

origin of all motivation, rooted in instinct, he remained bound to the necessity of giving priority to the arousal of libidinal wishes as the source of the situation in which the signal of anxiety is given. Yet again and again it seems as if he is also saying that the loss of the libidinal object, separation from the mother and later from other emotionally significant persons, is the situation which the ego perceives as the danger to itself, the threat of self-annihilation through the loss of the other, and that the concepts of birth trauma, and castration fear are powerful, dramatic, and dynamic symbols of the central meaning of all anxiety, fear of the loss of the significant other without whom the self cannot exist.

May has raised the question as to whether Freud was not using both birth and castration as "symbolic for the separation from the loved object."⁷⁸ Although Freud may not consciously have come to the place where he could say that these were symbols, and only symbols, his increasing insight concerning the centrality of separation from an emotionally significant person continued to push him in that direction. May feels that this was a positive trend, allowing for the emphasis upon the infant's early relations with its mother as being of the utmost significance in the development of anxiety patterns.⁷⁹

⁷⁸May, op. cit., p. 120. ⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 122-23.

This stress on the interpersonal nature of anxiety, with the loss of the other being perceived by the organism as the equivalent of self-loss, intrapersonal disintegration, would not deny the validity of a description of the raising of the tension level within the organism, an accumulation of undirected drive, of a physiological nature.

However, to call this somatic energy instinct is not helpful to a contemporary understanding of the immediate situation, and to say that it is this increase in drive which leads to the ego's perception of a danger is not compatible with the original infantile learning of the fear of separation. It is not the infant's increased physiological need which causes the mother to leave. When she is present, need arises and she meets it. So even though increased need is unpleasant, the presence of the mother assures its fulfillment. It is only when she is absent that need arises to high intensity because of her inability to observe its increase. Thus the infant learns to fear her absence, for it is only at that time that need reaches highly unpleasant intensity. The separation leads to the fear of unfulfilled need, not vice versa.

Allport has pointed to "the essential emptiness of all instinct formulae."⁸⁰ To posit a universal instinct

⁸⁰Gordon Allport, Personality and Social Encounter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 207.

of sex or aggression, love or hate, does not say anything meaningful about a specific person in a specific situation at this very moment. "The really important questions concerning love - and concerning hate - are postinstinctive questions."⁸¹ It is the contemporary expression, its form and motivation, which forms the significant material for investigation. This is not to deny a past learning, but the past learning has taken place in the matrix of a family where it is unavoidable that attachments, with both positive and negative elements, be formed. They are formed concretely as a function of the particular constellation of relationships in which the infant and young child finds himself. To say that these relationships are merely the result of an instinct seeking an object "is simply not helpful."⁸² It is the interpersonal situation into which the child is born and his learning of relationship, his learning of dependence, both physically and emotionally, his learning of the sense of helplessness in the face of separation from the ones upon whom he is dependent, his learning that the existence, the functioning, and fulfillment of his own self is only in relation to another, that is determinative of the nature of anxiety as separation fear and the situations which are perceived as threatening self-loss through the loss of the significant other. And,

⁸¹Ibid. ⁸²Ibid., p. 208.

of course, it has been observed that Freud himself moved away from the primary emphasis on the role of the instincts in anxiety and toward the threat of separation, the perception of the loss of another, the disruption of an interpersonal relationship, as being a danger to the self, and thus, the significant factor in the arousal of anxiety.

CHAPTER VI

THE INTERPERSONAL NATURE OF THE SELF

It has been stated that a perceptive reading of Freud's developing concepts of anxiety would show clues to a formulation of a theory of anxiety whose etiology was not most meaningfully stated in somatic terminology. This is not to deny the physiological foundation for the development and functioning of human behavior, but it is to raise the issue of the learning in an interpersonal context of behavior tendencies which we term personality. The importance of relation with another as a factor in the anxiety reaction was not overlooked by Freud, but it has been pointed out that his own presuppositions limited the development of these interpersonal aspects.

Others, not so limited, have gone farther in the elaboration of a self theory which is built upon observations of interpersonal behavior. It is central to the thesis of this present work that such a conceptuality is a meaningful one out of which to understand the dynamics of anxiety, and, in turn, to understand grief as anxiety.

This chapter will seek to examine in more detail the development of the personality, the self, which reacts to the loss of or threat of separation from others with the emotion of anxiety, which perceives the breaking of a relationship as a threat to its own existence.

I. DEFINITION OF SELF

By the term self is meant the result of the individual person's differentiating not only his physical body but also his own unique patterning of his perceptions and values centered about his lifelong task of creating, sustaining, and actualizing himself. It is the "I" which I think of when I am aware of myself, or which, even without conscious awareness, has learned to function as a whole system according to certain patterns of self-consistency, in order to maintain the integrity and unity of the whole organism.¹ This concept contains within it both of the uses of the word "self" in psychology: (1) Self-as-object, when I think of "me", and (2) Self-as-process, the learned pattern of functioning of the organism as it seeks to enhance itself according to certain learned values.²

A central factor to keep in mind is that the human infant is not born a complete self. He becomes a self by virtue of two factors, both of which are necessary: (1) physiological potential, a major element of which is the capacity for symbolizing behavior, of which language is a form primary in importance; and (2) the fact that the in-

¹Prescott Lecky, Self-Consistency (New York: Island Press, 1945), p. 82.

²Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: Wiley, 1957), p. 468.

fant is born into a social community, a group of persons, a family, a neighborhood, and various social institutions, and with whom he will be forced to establish communication.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERPERSONAL SELF

Norman Cameron summarizes the process of coming to selfhood in his definition of personality:

The dynamic organization of interlocking behavior systems that each of us develops through learning processes, as he grows from a biological newborn to a biosocial adult in an environment of other individuals and other cultural products.³

The adult is biosocial not only because he is capable of interacting and needs to interact with others outside himself, but primarily in the sense that his own individuality is constituted by other selves in such a way that his own self is interpersonal in nature: "...the Self exists only in dynamic relation with the other.... (It) is constituted by its relation to the other; ... it has its being in its relationship; and...this relationship is necessarily personal."⁴

This is made inescapable by the newborn's dependence for his very survival upon others and the combined necessity and capacity of communication. Thus, a master key to

³Norman Cameron, The Psychology of Behavior Disorders (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), p. 16. (Emphasis mine.)

⁴John Macmurray, Persons in Relation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 17.

understanding the development and functioning of the interpersonal, but differentiated, self is the dynamic character of language.

Differentiation of the Organism from the Environment

Sherif and Cantril use the term "ego" in the same sense as "self" is used here. According to them, the ego is not an innate, fixed, and immutable entity, nor is there any instinctual ego drive.⁵ Rather, it is a constellation of many attitudes relating to the "delimiting, differentiated and accumulating 'I', 'me', 'mine' experiences."⁶

The infant's first responses are global ones both toward himself and his environment without any distinction between what is inside the skin and what is outside. The first step toward selfhood is to learn to react to himself as a physical object, to differentiate the various parts of the body, and thus to distinguish himself from the surrounding environment. Especially significant in this process is the coordination of hand and mouth interaction. This interaction, well developed by six months, provides the basic material for "the differentiation of the infant's

⁵Muzafer Sherif and Hadley Cantril, The Psychology of Ego-Involvements (New York: Wiley, 1947), p. 2.

⁶Ibid., p. 4.

body from everything else in the universe."⁷ There arises out of this coordination the delineation of two forms of experience: the self-sentient (of which sucking the thumb is the prototype) and the non-self-sentient. The former becomes the "pre-information or information which will presently be organized as the conception of the body," while the latter, the touching of something with the hand and sucking with the mouth that which does not also feel touched and sucked, has reference to external reality.⁸ Self-sentient activities will soon unite and become a significant key in the unification of all experience which is understood subjectively as being mine and which is symbolized by the personal pronouns "my" and "mine".⁹

The self is not at first "inside"; as the child first learns to know it, it is the body. In time, however, ...the ego is referred "inward". As language and the system of images develop, the child builds up an "inner world" in contrast to the "outer world".¹⁰

The Dynamic Role of Language

The development of language greatly facilitates this process because it enables the child to distinguish more clearly between "I" and "it" and "I" and "you", between

⁷Harry Stack Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (New York: Norton, 1953), p. 136.

⁸Ibid., p. 141. ⁹Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰Gardner Murphy, Personality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 586.

word and meaning, to think of himself as differentiated, to express himself. Language makes it all more precise and more complex.¹¹ Illustrative of the inner thought processes at work is the way in which many children use their own names to refer to themselves before they use the personal pronouns "I" and "me". When these pronouns emerge, a giant step forward is taken by the child in forming and assimilating attitudes about and toward himself.¹²

It can be seen from the language being used in this description that taking place at the same time the child is learning to react to himself as a physical object, but then continuing for a lifetime, he is also learning to react to himself as a social object, a self, a person. He evaluates himself by the responses others make to him and the status they give to him. This is quite obvious. Since there is no self to begin with, no innate, developed attitudes directed toward the individual organism, no conclusion can be drawn except that the material for the self concept is given by the environment, the most significant part of which for the infant is the mothering one. "What happens to the infant is, to all intents and purposes, identical, whether the mother or the mother's helper is involved...."¹³ Therefore, she, and any other person who helps in the per-

¹¹Sherif, op. cit., p. 165. ¹²Ibid., p. 177.

¹³Sullivan, op. cit., p. 120.

formance of the mothering role, is the source of the behavior toward the infant which the infant incorporates as his own responses to himself. John Macmurray is correct when he points out that "genetically the first correlate of the Self is the mother."¹⁴ But it is also true that she is the first correlate of the interpersonal self. "Mothers are the persons who interpret us to ourselves. In so doing, they help us become the selves we are."¹⁵

Harry S. Sullivan describes the formation of the foundation of attitudes toward the self in terms of the infant's responses to three aspects of the interpersonal situation with the mother: rewards, a gradient of anxiety, and intense, overwhelming, sudden anxiety. Out of these forms of perceived mothering behavior "there comes an initial personification of three phases of what presently will be me, that which is invariably connected with the sentience of my body...."¹⁶ The "me" is experienced, respectively in response to these three forms of the interpersonal situation, as "good-me, bad-me, and not-me."¹⁷ They all come into being to varying degrees, dependent upon the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the

¹⁴Macmurray, op. cit., p. 80.

¹⁵Earl Loomis, The Self in Pilgrimage (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 41.

¹⁶Sullivan, op. cit., p. 161. ¹⁷Ibid.

mothering one and the infant, but they are linked together as referring to the same person by "their relatedness to the growing conception of 'my body'."¹⁸ We see here the material out of which all experiences referring to the self are built, and the material is composed of the perceived behavior, the attitudes and acts, of the mother toward the child. The foundation of the self are the responses of the significant other. The individual self is interpersonal at its core, arising out of and continuing to be dependent upon the other.

George H. Mead states that

self-consciousness is an awakening in ourselves of the group of attitudes which we are arousing in others.... The individual possesses a self only in relationship to the group of selves of the other members of his social group.¹⁹

Speech obviously increases the effectiveness of these self-reactions which are responses to the reactions of significant others to the child. He quickly learns to use the same words about himself that others use in referring to him. At first, the self-directed words lack much of the intended meaning of the significant other who originally used them, but gradually the self-attitudes expressed by the words will tend naturally to be the

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹George H. Mead, "Language and the Development of the Self," Readings in Social Behavior, T.M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley, eds. (New York: Holt, 1947), p. 189.

attitudes adopted by the child rather than others.²⁰

Once a child has begun to speak, his own speech becomes reinforcing for the attitudes which he expresses toward and about himself and for the behavior which is implied in his speech. The individual hears his own sounds just as well as he hears the sounds of others, and they are no less a stimulus to him when used by him than when they are expressed by others. When we hear a word, whether someone else speaks it or whether we ourselves speak it, we hear it in reference to ourselves. Just as there is set up a tendency to respond to another's speech, so also is there set up a tendency to respond to our own.²¹ Our language becomes a means of fixing within ourselves concepts about ourselves and tendencies to respond in certain ways in the future. These concepts about ourselves and the tendencies to respond in ways consistent with our self concepts are at the core of what we are referring to when the term self is used. Since these words first came from others and carried with them the attitudes of these others, now by the repetition of these words, the attitudes of the others toward us have

²⁰Cameron, op. cit., pp. 98-100.

²¹George H. Mead, Mind, Self, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 108.

become literally a part of us, of the self.

This cannot be clearly understood unless something of the nature and purpose of language is recognized. Its primitive origins lay in the needs of human beings as they sought to live together. Communication was and is necessary. In our society at the present time adults view one of their primary responsibilities as being the socialization of the child. Since the ability to communicate greatly facilitates this process, there is pressure to bring the infant along quickly to the place where he can respond to the adult world with what Sullivan refers to as "consensually validated" symbols.²²

In other words, a particular language is a vital part of and a principle means of conveying a particular culture.

Language is not a passive instrument for the transmission of the ideas of a culture. It itself bears the earmarks of a culture and in turn modifies the character of the situations which it expresses.²³

So the point is that language not only provides for the accumulation of cultural skills and knowledge as such, but it inevitably passes on to the new generation the ideas, beliefs, values, prejudices, and attitudes of the older generation. "You cannot convey a language as a pure

²²Sullivan, op. cit., p. 183.

²³E. Freeman, Social Psychology (New York: Holt, 1936), p. 106.

abstraction...; you inevitably in some degree convey also the life that lies behind it."²⁴ In conforming to the conventions of language behavior, a child also begins to conform to what these conventions imply in his culture. But it is more than merely an outward conformity; these implications (the ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values) become a part of his own private thought, his self, as he "organizes his private thinking along social lines."²⁵ This process seems to be what Mead has referred to as the "perfecting of the self", in which the child has successfully taken the attitudes and roles of those upon whom he is dependent and made them a vital part of his very own self.²⁶

How is this understood as taking place? It can be grasped only as the inseparable linkage of language and personality is seen, as language and selfhood develop together in an interpersonal situation of dependence, as the primary function of language is seen as the establishing of communion between persons and the conveying of self to self.

²⁴Mead, Mind, Self, and Society, p. 283.

²⁵Cameron, op. cit., p. 86.

²⁶Mead, Mind, Self, and Society, p. 197.

The answer to the question, "Why does a child learn to talk?", contains insights into the development of the interpersonal self. It is clear that learning to talk grows out of the very intimate relationship of the infant to his parents, particularly his mother. These are people upon whom he is absolutely dependent, but with whom, at first, he cannot communicate. Within a very brief period of time, however, he cannot help but notice that his cries of distress bring mother to soothe, comfort, and feed. Her responses, then, give a meaning to his own cries, and he has an elementary tool to use to bring about some measure of control over his environment. So gradually these utterances become more consciously intentional.²⁷ Soon babbling begins, and vocalization becomes one of the infant's chief pleasurable pasttimes.²⁸ But, as we have seen, into this individual activity the parents intrude. The fact that parents want the child to learn to talk must not be overlooked as a factor in learning. This is not alone so that

²⁷M. M. Lewis, Language in Society (New York: Social Science Publishers, 1948), p. 15.

²⁸Gardner Murphy, L. B. Murphy, and Theodore Newcomb, Experimental Social Psychology (Rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. 232.

he may be able to communicate his needs more accurately, but it is a matter of pride with them. They imitate his sounds and add simple words of their own. The child then begins to imitate them.

M. M. Lewis states that there are two incentives that impel the child to communicate:

1. Manipulative - To serve his primary needs;
2. Declarative - To express himself.²⁹

Perhaps so, but does he not overlook the most important factor, the emotional relationship which exists between the child and his parents, and the child's desire to please? The desire to please, of course, is not conscious desire in the adult sense. It is rather the learned response by the infant that certain behavior of his produces behavior on the part of the significant ones that is need-fulfilling for him.

The parents encourage the child to imitate their sounds. They spend a great amount of time with him. They reward his successful efforts. They respond with gestures of approval and affection to his words or even approximations of words. So what if he does not know what they mean? "Ma-ma-ma" is no different to him than "buh-buh-buh." But it is different to mama. "So if this is what it takes to get this warm, feeding person to love me (i.e. feed me

²⁹Lewis, op. cit., pp. 23-24

and make me comfortable), all right, 'ma-ma-ma'." And mama, and also "da-da", by their rewarding behavior eliminate the "wrong sounds" and "fixate the right elements."³⁰

Mowrer quotes John Whiting:

Soon the child is likely to discover that "doing what mama says" is, in general, rewarding and will develop an increasingly strong tendency, at least during the years of dependency, not only to do, but also to say what "mother says".³¹

As the parent conveys himself to the child by meeting the needs of the child, he does so to the accompaniment of language. Then the parent progresses to the teaching of language. Since this takes place during the years of dependency, and since the learning process involves the relationship between the child and significant persons in his life, this whole process necessarily becomes loaded with emotional content, which, we must remember, is the first meaning language has to the child.

Yet, although simple responses of words to words may be explained by imitation and simple conditioning, this alone is not adequate to explain later and more complicated responses.³² This is the relevance of the reference to the obvious emotional involvement. Mowrer, in his highly in-

³⁰Murphy, Experimental Social Psychology, p. 233.

³¹O. H. Mowrer, Learning Theory and Personality Dynamics (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), p. 686.

³²Murphy, Experimental Social Psychology, p. 232.

teresting and informative paper, "On the Psychology of 'Talking Birds'," after describing the process of teaching birds to talk, says:

Words, as a result of being combined with 'loving care', take on alike for bird and baby secondary reinforcing value and...they have this value when uttered, not only by others, but also by the bird or baby.³³

This means that the saying of words begins to be done not just to get an immediate response from the parents, but also because they have begun to be of value in and of themselves.

Identification

Mowrer goes even beyond the concept of the secondary reinforcing value of verbalization to suggest identification as the most dynamic mechanism behind the learning of speech. He says that according to Freud, intense emotions were at work in this mechanism which would provide a powerful drive or motive. Both liking and fearing are involved. Speech, then, not only results from copied behavior, but from an ambivalent emotional drive to be the person identified with. "The identifier not only acts like but also likes (and fears) the individual identified with."³⁴

The emotional content of speech, as we have noted, begins much earlier than the attempts to imitate actual words. It enters when the infant first realizes that his

³³Mowrer, op. cit., pp. 708-09. ³⁴Ibid., p. 715.

sounds, even though it be crying, bring about some measure of control over significant persons. Even the earliest sounds, as well as the approximation of words and actual words themselves, become a means of establishing and securing a relationship with these significant persons, and thus, these vocalizations are "rooted in affective states."³⁵ This is the first meaning of words.

Later, as the child is in the process of becoming more articulate, he is doing so at a time when he is meeting his first real frustrations in life, such as weaning, toilet training, not being able to play with everything he puts his hands on. Referring to Mowrer's hypothesis that the child's vocalization now might be an attempt to recapture some of the satisfactions of an earlier period, Percival Symonds adds: "In the frustrating state the infant is afraid of loss or separation and the sounds are an attempt to recapture, at least symbolically, the essence of the mother who is the source of satisfaction."³⁶ Actually the development of speech now becomes motivated by the attempt to avoid anxiety. It becomes a means of "holding parents, if not physically, at least emotionally near."³⁷

³⁵A. R. Lindesmith and A. L. Strauss, Social Psychology (New York: Dryden Press, 1949), p. 146.

³⁶Mowrer, op. cit., p. 726.

³⁷Murphy, Experimental Social Psychology, p. 586.

Selfhood and language are tied inseparably together. We develop as selves through a process of social interaction in which language plays a determinative role. Our present concepts of ourselves are framed in the thought structures given to us by our language. As we learn language in the context of total dependency upon parents, our learning of words which they give to us places certain emotional attitudes of theirs literally within our self structure. In other words, the interpersonal, highly emotional nature of the situation necessitates that the learning of language involves also the incorporation of significant parts of the other self from whom the language is learned. We learn to be social beings, and therefore we are presently sustained as persons through a communion with others which language facilitates, not by means of the simple impartation of information, but through the stimulation of an interpersonal, emotional response.

The developing and sustaining of the interpersonal nature of the self continues because the interpersonal nature of human life continues. "For selfhood to occur and be maintained, a person must be continuing in communication, and the environment must be continuing to accept him as communicator."³⁸ And the individual, in order to reduce rising gradients of anxiety, to fulfill a growing complexity

³⁸Loomis, op. cit., p. 57.

of needs, continues to identify with, incorporate into himself as a literal part of himself, those aspects of the behavior of others, and thus in reality the others themselves, which are perceived by himself as facilitating the meeting of needs. Erikson points out that "children at different stages of their development identify with those part aspects of people by which they themselves are most immediately affected, whether in reality or fantasy."³⁹ He makes it clear that identity, or selfhood, is not the simple sum of all identifications, but that these introjected "part aspects" of other persons are the material of self formation.

The self seems to have two ways of coming into being in interpersonal relationships, each of which involves the incorporation in some fashion of a significant other person. The first is self-personification, accepting as our proper response to our own being the responses of others to us. The second is identification with valued attributes of significant others. The first seems to have priority chronologically and forms the elementary self which is necessary before the second can take place.

It has been suggested that what is referred to as

³⁸Loomis, op. cit., p. 57.

³⁹Erik Erickson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," Identity and Anxiety, Maurice Stein, et al., eds. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), p. 46.

the self, although taking place in a unique physiological organism and to some degree directed, modified, and limited by the physiological processes, is actually made up of an individualized organization of the responses of other selves. Macmurray describes it by saying that the development of the individual person is the development of his relation to another person. "Personal individuality is not an original given fact. It is achieved through progressive differentiation of the original unity of the 'you and I'."⁴⁰ The interpersonal situation is not only necessary for the development of such a self, but is also necessary for the sustaining of selfhood.

The idea of an isolated agent is self-contradictory. Any agent is necessarily in relation to the Other. Apart from this essential relation he does not exist.... Persons, therefore, are constituted by their mutual relation to one another.⁴¹

To understand the self as an interpersonal unity makes it possible to understand anxiety in its interpersonal dimension, and thus to perceive the loss or separation from another, or any threat of separation, as anxiety. That which tends to sever relationship is perceived by the self as danger, as attacking the core of its unified existence. When significant relationship is actually destroyed, a vital part of the self is immediately perceived and experienced as eliminated.

⁴⁰Macmurray, op. cit., p. 91. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 24.

IV. SUMMARY

Each individual self is in reality a social self, or an interpersonal self, comprised of the dynamic union of the learned responses toward one's self whose original source was the perceived behavior of significant others to the infant and small child, and the introjected, perceived significant aspects of emotionally related persons. This process of development is greatly facilitated by the learning of language, which continues to have the same emotional quality about it as did the context of its original learning from significant others. Thus, being a person who came into being through interaction with other persons and whose selfhood is sustained through relationship, any broken relationship is perceived as a threat to the integrity of the self, and the organism responds with the subjective experience of pain and produces behavior which seeks to protect the self.

CHAPTER VII

SEPARATION ANXIETY IN GRIEF

The thesis of this work is that grief is most accurately understood when the major dynamic of the experience is seen to be anxiety cued off by the death of a person with whom one has been emotionally related, and when all of the behavioral responses observed and reported are in some way related to this anxiety.

This thesis does not deny that hostility, hate, guilt, depression, and perhaps other emotions which many observers have identified in the reactions of the grieving person are actually involved. They are, and they are present as complicating factors, perhaps adding to the intensity of the subjective experience, very likely making grief work more difficult. Yet one purpose of this work is to demonstrate the close dynamic relationship between these responses and the anxiety which is at the heart of the total grief reaction.

In this chapter, it will be necessary to present clearly the source of the pain which is felt and which has been termed anxiety, and to do so in such a way as to make clear that the experience of the death of an emotionally significant person is simply one, albeit an extremely intense one, in a series of experiences whose nature are essentially the same. These are termed separation ex-

periences, and anxiety itself is defined as fear of separation.

The purpose of the chapter will be accomplished by presupposing the theoretical foundation already laid for understanding the interpersonal nature of the self, which clarifies the direction which Freud had begun in his definition of anxiety. In the light of this conceptual framework reference will be made to the origin of anxiety in the individual.

I. BASIC ANXIETY: ORIGIN AND NATURE

The concept of basic anxiety is a useful one. It implies a number of things.

Original Anxiety

First, it points to the original experience or experiences of anxiety upon which all other later anxiety reactions are based, no matter how these may be stimulated nor what terminology be used to describe them.

Universal Learning of Anxiety

The second implication is that of the universal learning of anxiety. There are various ways of expressing this. Considerable time was taken to discuss Freud's concept of the intrapsychic origin of anxiety. Yet it is necessary to follow the new directions toward which he seemed to be pointing and which Whitaker and Malone sum-

marize by saying that that which becomes intra-personal was originally inter-personal.¹

Horney speaks of basic anxiety as being the infant's response to "the feeling...of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world."² Being inherently dependent upon others, this feeling may be either lessened or increased by parental behavior which is warm, loving, need-fulfilling or which is erratic and lacking in these attitudes.

For Sullivan, anxiety is unavoidably perpetuating from one generation to the next, since it is a response which is made by the infant to the anxious mother, who is perceived by the infant as threatening his security. It is learned simply by empathy.³

Garre's approach seems to be somewhat similar to that of Sullivan.⁴ Anxiety is unavoidably present in every human existence, which contrasts with that of other animal life. First, the energy of the parent is not

¹Carl Whitaker and Thomas P. Malone, "Anxiety and Psychotherapy," Identity and Anxiety, Maurice Stein, et al., eds. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), pp. 167-68.

²Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: Norton, 1945), p. 41.

³Harry S. Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (New York: Norton, 1953), p. 41.

⁴Walter J. Garre, Basic Anxiety (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), pp. 1-4.

instinctively directed toward the small child; it can be diverted into other channels. Therefore, the more energy which is bound to the past the less is available to the child in the present and future. Second, humans have interpretations and emotions (including fear, disgust, reluctance) in regard to reproduction. To the degree that the negative emotions are present, the child is seen as a burden and is unwanted. To the degree that the child is an unwanted burden, there is resentment on the part of the parent and the wish to be rid of the child. The child, on the emotional level

will be pervaded by the feeling that its existence is threatened. It will fear death to the degree that it senses its mother's resentment. We should not underestimate the infant's perceptivity.⁵

Anxiety as a Central Motivation

A final contribution of the concept of basic anxiety is that it points to anxiety as being a central motivating force for the human organism, a drive in personality adjustment. It is recognized that anxiety (threat, psychic pain) must be overcome or avoided and that forms of behavior are developed in order to cope with it. Garre says that "basic anxiety is the key to personality adjustment,...the central point in the adaptation of humans to life."⁶ The behavior which is learned is in relation

⁵Ibid., p. 2. ⁶Ibid., pp. 3-4.

to others, since personality is structured and organized out of affective states within the matrix of interpersonal relationships.⁷

Common Elements in Theories of Anxiety

All theories of anxiety seem to hold in common a number of ideas:

Anxiety is essentially the perception of a threat to the self; some internal or external event or situation is interpreted on an unconscious level as a danger. There are elements both of the past and future. The stimulus triggers a memory of a past threatening situation, and as a result pain to the self is anticipated. Avoidance of this danger, or threat, is sought by some form of escape from or denial or distortion of the perceived situation.

II. WHAT IS FEARED?

The major question is, "What is it that is feared, and why?" If we answer the question in terms of separation from another, it must still be asked, "Why is separation feared?" Answers in terms of instinct have already been portrayed as not being helpful in understanding either the origin or the contemporary meaning of the reaction.⁸

⁷Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 167-68.

⁸See pp. 163-66.

Separation Fear as a Response Conditioned by Pain

The attempt at an explanation must begin with a very simple, ridiculously self-evident statement: pain is painful. When the infant and his very first experiences are considered, great care must be taken not to read into his behavior the adult meanings of certain responses to specific stimuli. It cannot legitimately be said that the infant is first afraid of separation from a significant other, or of death, or even that he is afraid, in the meaning that it will later come to have. The infant, as far as adults can judge, simply has a global response to pleasure and pain, comfort and discomfort, and he responds to pain or discomfort by the automatic mechanism of crying. Heibrunn makes the observation which any mother could have made, that her leaving the room provokes crying in the baby. The reason given is the infant's fear of abandonment and annihilation.⁹ Perhaps this fear develops later, but it is not present at first. The meaning of abandonment has to be learned. The infant is helpless. But he does not at first "know" himself to be helpless. He needs another person in order to live. Grotjahn points out the significance of the infant's fear of being left alone by the mother, a

⁹Gert Heibrunn, "On Weeping," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXIV (1955), 252.

separation which could lead to his death.¹⁰ But it must not be assumed that the infant at first has some knowledge of this or even that he "knows" it or has some intuition of it on an unconscious level. If actually left unattended, he would soon die. In this case he would not learn or "know" anything; he would not know anxiety as people can later experience it and communicate their experiences of it. He would have only the global, physiological response to displeasure, discomfort, pain, without even a primitive, unconscious interpretation of anxiety. As this pain grows more and more intense a response can be observed which adults could describe as panic, a global, unthinking response.

However, the minute anything is done to relieve pain, to bring pleasure (to feed, to warm, to dry, to powder), learning begins to take place which changes the entire picture. He learns to become dependent upon and to seek mothering behavior. He learns that there are experiences other than pain. He learns that he is helpless to change the experience from pain to comfort, except insofar as the automatic response of crying is rewarded by comforting, mothering behavior and is thus stamped in as social behavior, a form of behavior which elicits a response

¹⁰Martin Grotjahn, "Ego Identity and the Fear of Death and Dying," Journal of the Hillside Hospital, IX (1960), 148.

from another. Monsour has spoken of the infant's "crying as a symbol of need-distress...which summons the mother into symbiosis."¹¹ When the mothering one is present, he has now learned to anticipate the meeting of his needs. When the other is not present, his needs are frustrated and pain and discomfort are felt. There is the learned interpretation that the absence of the mothering one is a threat to his well-being. Or, he may have learned that when the significant other is present his needs are sometimes met and sometimes not met. Still, by virtue of the fact that he is kept alive, there is a learned dependence on the mother. Yet along with this there is also a learned uncertainty concerning the meeting of his needs, and thus the interpretation of possible threat to his comfort and satisfaction even in the presence of the mother. However, the only alternative the infant has is to cling to the only object of possible satisfaction offered to him by his environment. "Intolerable anxiety (is) helplessly accepted as part of the relationship with the mother."¹² So either way, whether the mother is regularly need-fulfilling and anxiety-reducing or whether she is herself anxious and inadequate and frustrating and herself a threat, the presence and approval of the significant other is learned by the

¹¹Karem J. Monsour, "Asthma and the Fear of Death," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXIX (1960), 66.

¹²Ibid.

infant as that which must be sought and sustained and that absence and disapproval is a prelude to frustration and pain. Because of "remembered" pain in contrast with comfort, there is the learned anticipated pain and discomfort, the threat to his well-being.

Thus it is seen that the infant has learned of his own helplessness; he has learned to depend on others; he has learned to fear the absence of the significant other. The thesis here presented is that the uninterpreted, global experience of pain contrasted with the experience of comfort forms the foundation for the learning of anxiety, the learned, perceived threat to the self, with the interpretation of the intensity of the threat in relation to one's perceived ability or lack of it to cope with the danger situation.

Evidence from experimental psychology. Substantiation of this approach is found in the work of experimental psychologists. Hoch states:

The perception of pain, and related experiences, must be thought of as precursors to the development of fear and anxiety.... Fear reactions in the beginning are unconditioned responses and produce a total reaction of the organism in preparation to fight or flight as the environmental constellation demands it.¹³

The only oversight of this statement is that it is

¹³Paul H. Hoch, "Biosocial Aspects of Anxiety," Anxiety, Paul H. Hoch and Joseph Zubin, eds. (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1950), p. 106.

not complete in regard to the human infant, which can neither fight nor flee as forms of direct, overt behavior, and who is totally dependent upon the type and quality of care the mothering person or persons desire to give and are capable of giving.

Mowrer has also stated the experimentalist's understanding of the origin of fear:

Closely associated with the capacity to feel pain and other primary drives is the capacity to feel fear.... Laboratory studies indicate that in its most primitive, unconditioned forms, fear is aroused by pain and other forms of intense stimulation; whereas, in its conditioned or learned form, it is set off by those inherently harmless stimuli which happen to have been temporally associated, or contiguous, with pain producing objects or events. Elicited originally, along with pain, by noxious stimulation, fear is subsequently produced in pure form by signals.¹⁴

It is to be noted that in this view it is clear that anxiety is based upon a somatic condition of pain, or increased tension. Now this is precisely what Freud has pointed to in his first theory as the source of anxiety: increased tension, to which he applied the term sexual, which did not have a channel of expression and thereby of reduction. However, the hypothesis presented here has picked up the insights later given, but not fully worked out, by Freud and which have also been pointed to by other observers. This hypothesis insists on the origin of anxiety out of

¹⁴O. H. Mowrer, "Pain, Punishment, and Anxiety," Anxiety, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

the physiological condition of pain, not necessarily specifically localized pain, but a general sense of discomfort, the loss of the global sense of well-being. Yet this position goes further to indicate that this internal condition is only the starting point for the learning of an anxiety which can best be described by saying that it is the fear of separation from the significant other upon whose presence the organism's well-being depends. Or, stated another way, it is the concern for one's own well-being which is threatened by the absence of the mothering one.

At this point, the infant does not have an internalized ego. One of two things, or perhaps both of two things, could be said. If the infant has an ego, it is simply the physiological organism as such. On the other hand, Schur's reference to the mother as the external ego is quite compatible with the hypothesis of this work.¹⁵

It has been shown in the previous chapter that the responses of significant others toward the infant are incorporated as his attitude toward himself, and thus is the foundation of the self. The external ego, the mother, gradually becomes internalized: not only her loving and accepting behavior, but also her punishing and disapproving

¹⁵Max Schur, "Discussion," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, XV (1960), 77.

behavior, which includes her leaving, removing her presence, the experiences of her absence. So built into the organization of affective responses which we call the self, derived from and to a large degree equivalent to the mother, is the fear of her absence, the anxiety which results from separation from her. These are the good and bad objects that Klein spoke of, now become the "good me" and "bad me" that Sullivan described. An individual's self contains within it the tendency to respond to separation from significant others as if it were a threat to the existence of the self, experienced as the signal of anxiety.

Summary of the learning sequence. To summarize the development of the hypothesis to this point: first is pain; second is the fear of pain, anticipation of it; third is the fear of the absence of the mothering one which signals that pain is to come; fourth, the development of the ego through the internalization of the other, including the "leaving", threatening behavior of the mother; fifth, the perception of separation from significant others as threat to the self. It is now only a short step to the first unarticulated, and later perhaps conscious and expressed, fear of the annihilation of the ego, the loss of identity, the ceasing to be as a person, self-loss. Finally, when it is learned through experience, there is the fear of death which is the final and total destruction of identity.

Evidence for the sequence from psychotherapy. In a number of its aspects, this sequence is sustained by a number of investigators, even though their theoretical orientation differs considerably from that presented here. Especially do they point to the derivative nature of the fear of destruction of the ego which produces the fear of death.

Friedman speaks of death and separation anxiety in equivalent terms, with the related feeling of exclusion rising out of the intense affective reaction of being excluded from the primal scene.¹⁶ Chadwick states that the fear of death derives from castration anxiety, and is the fear of desertion by the super-ego, which of course, would be the losing of a love object, since the super-ego is the introjected rewarding and punishing behavior of the parent. Any menace to the ego forms the material for the fear of death, and the ego perceives threat in relation to its own sense of helplessness.¹⁷ Sarnoff and Corwin feel that their investigation upholds the hypothesis concerning the relationship of castration anxiety and death when they discovered that high castration anxiety subjects

¹⁶David B. Friedman, "Death Anxiety and the Primal Scene," Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review, XLVIII (1961), 114.

¹⁷Mary Chadwick, "Notes upon the Fear of Death," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, X (1929), 323-24.

had a significantly higher increase in fear of death after being shown sexually arousing pictures than did those subjects who were judged as having low castration anxiety.¹⁸ Brodsky goes back even beyond the phallic stage to the anal stage to posit an even earlier component of the fear of death in memory traces from the anal stage, with the extinction of the self being the psychic representation of the excreted stool. This experience, he feels, forms the basis for the person's knowledge of separation.¹⁹

The theory presented here goes back not only prior to the phallic stage and castration anxiety, but even earlier than the anal stage and the excretion of the stool, and earlier than separation from the breast, upon which Klein has placed so much importance, to the very earliest of the interpersonal relations of the infant. It would not be denied out of hand that all of these others may be involved to greater or lesser degree in the total experience of an infant and small child, nor that they may be used, along with the concept of birth trauma, as powerful symbols expressing the reality and the meaning of separation. The major purpose for the use of this psychoanalytic

¹⁸Irving Sarnoff and Seth M. Corwin, "Castration Anxiety and the Fear of Death," Journal of Personality, XXVII (1959), 374-85.

¹⁹Bernard Brodsky, "The Self-Representation, Analinity, and the Fear of Dying," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, VII (1959), 95-99.

material, however, is to use the power of observation of these investigators as evidence in behalf of the learning sequence presented above as a part of this work, and to reinforce the conception of anxiety as essentially separation fear. It is to be noted that the theory here presented establishes the fear of separation in the cumulative learning experiences of the infant, beginning immediately after birth but taking some unspecified time for development, that absence of the mothering one tends to be temporally congruous with an increase of somatic tension, pain, discomfort, and the return of the mother tends to bring the rewarding behavior of reduction of tension, comfort. The resultant learning is that separation from the significant other is to be feared, and the presence of the other is to be sought.

Fear of the Loss of One's Self Through Separation

The answer to the question, "What is feared in the anxiety reaction?" is, on the level of the older child, the adolescent, the adult, that it is the destruction of one's own self, or death. Simmel said that since the ego's aim is to maintain itself, the basic fear is of annihilation, of death²⁰ Meissner stated that what the person

²⁰Ernst Simmel, "Self-Preservation and the Death Instinct," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XIII (1944), 165-66.

dreads is the dissolution of his own personality.²¹ The point is clear enough. This is the ultimate dread on the level of one who has moved through all of the stages of learning presented above. But that which because of learning cues off the anxiety reaction, the perception of threat to one's own self, one's very life as a person, and in actual fact the prior learning of anxiety upon which it is based, is separation from the significant other person, broken or disrupted relationships. Therefore when the term anxiety is used, it should be conceived of as separation fear.

Not only does the self come into being in the context of affective interpersonal relationships and take on a basically interpersonal nature itself to such a degree that the loss of or separation from a significant person by the infant or small child is perceived to be a threat to its own well-being, but the adult human continues to have his self or ego needs met through meaningful relations with others. Man does not live alone, and indeed cannot without changing the nature of the self. Moreno goes so far as to say that the smallest social unit is what he calls the "social atom," this being "simply an individual and the people (near or distant) to whom he is emotionally

²¹W. W. Meissner, "Affective Response to Psychoanalytic Death Symbols," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LVI (1958), 295.

related at the time."²² Therefore, the removal of some person from the social atom is experienced as a threat to the individual who is the nucleus of that atom. "A man dies when his social atom dies."²³ Broken relationship is thus a stimulus to the ego's learned response to separation as threat, or anxiety.

May's conclusion has emphasized anxiety as the behavioral response signaling avoidance to any situation which is perceived as involving danger to one's existence as a self, "the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value which the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality."²⁴

The Central Value to One's Self of Relation with the Other

The interpersonal theory of personality development and dynamics holds that the major value in one's existence as a person is his relationship with other persons. This has been articulated in the previous chapter by seeking to show that the infant learns to be a self only by incorporation of, identification with, other persons, although it has been noted that there are cultural differences in the kind, number, and intensity of identifications. His own

²²J. L. Moreno, "The Social Atom and Death," Sociometry, X (1947), 80.

²³Ibid., p. 84.

²⁴Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), p. 191.

being can never even be conceived of apart from relation with others. Therefore a threat to the relationship is always perceived as a threat to the self. There is no escape by any person from "what is for him the ultimate threat to his existence — isolation from the Other by the act of the Other."²⁵

The other as a major value in a person's life is presented in the perceptive view of Fromm-Reichmann:

The conception of anxiety as the expression of the anticipated loss of love and approval, or separation, social isolation, or disruption of one's interpersonal relationships implies its close psychological affinity to loneliness. In fact, I believe that many of the emotional states to which psychiatrists refer as anxiety are actually states of loneliness or fear of loneliness.²⁶

One is reminded of the "terror" of loneliness as it is so poignantly described by Moustakas out of his own experience: "No one fully understood my terror or how this terror gave impetus to deep feelings of loneliness and isolation which had lain dormant within me."²⁷ Later he speaks of "loneliness anxiety" and the "vague, diffuse fear of loneliness."²⁸

²⁵John Macmurray, Persons in Relation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 89.

²⁶Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Psychiatric Aspects of Anxiety," Identity and Anxiety, op. cit., p. 132.

²⁷Clark E. Moustakas, Loneliness (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 2.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 25-26.

Relationship with others in a situation of mutual investment of affection is the central value of human life as it is known in this and many other cultures. A threat to that value is a threat to our own being; the perception of that threat cues the signal of anxiety, and the organism responds with behavioral mechanisms of defense. This behavior has as its purpose the evasion, denial, or distortion of reality in such a way as to reduce the perception of threat to the self, and includes repression, denial, phantasy, emotional insulation, apathy, substitution or displacement, rationalization, regression, projection, reaction formation, identification, compensation, sublimation. In addition there are overt attempts at escape through withdrawal, exaggerated activity, intensified sexual life, the use of drugs, and even escape into illness.

III. SEPARATION ANXIETY AS THE CENTRAL DYNAMIC OF GRIEF

In the light of the definition of anxiety as being essentially the fear response to separation from a significant other and the universal recognition of grief as a broken human relationship, an unusually dramatic and seemingly permanent form of loss of or separation from one in whom a person has emotional investment and with whom he has identified to some degree, the conclusion seems

inescapable that at the very center of grief is separation anxiety. Grief is one among many of a lifetime of separation experiences, each stimulating reactions of anxiety, differing in intensity because of a variety of factors, yet all being of basically the same order. Since the self is made up of a series of identifications, of emotional investments, then the destruction of the external referent is perceived and experienced as the destruction of an important aspect of one's own selfhood. Could any clearer and more potent illustration be found of separation from or the absence of an emotionally significant other person than the event of his death? The death of this other cues the response, threat to self, anxiety.

Evidence for the Thesis

Evidence for this conclusion comes from several sources. First, personal reports of grief sufferers themselves have indicated the similarities of the subjective experience. Second, empirical data of psychotherapists relate the responses of grief and anxiety. Third, when the behavioral reactions of grief and anxiety are isolated, their identity can be observed.

Personal reports. Clerk is an example: "No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear."²⁹ A

²⁹N. W. Clerk, A Grief Observed (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 7.

personal report to the writer by a woman whose husband had died after an illness states: "There was a feeling of anxiety before his passing. After, I seemed in a state of shock, a daze." And later: "I was afraid: Do not know why, unless it was because I always felt so secure with my husband."

In many cases bereavement dreams are not distinguishable from anxiety dreams. A subject reported to this writer a series of nightmares after which he woke up with characteristic signs of anxiety. In one dream his wife would be dying or dead. In actual fact she was suffering from a terminal illness. In another dream the subject would be dying by choking, suffocating. In yet another dream, upon awakening he would be unable to determine clearly whether it was he or his wife who was dying in the dream. In these cases the dreams tell more clearly and more dramatically than any written statement the fact that the death of an emotionally significant other is perceived by the ego as its own death, and that the subjective experience and its physiological accompaniments are those of the outbreak into consciousness of anxiety.

The strength of anxiety in grief and the thesis of Deutsch that the affect of "unmanifested grief will be found expressed to the full in one way or the other,"³⁰ was

³⁰Helen Deutsch, "Absence of Grief," The Psycho-analytic Quarterly, VI (1937), 13.

demonstrated in the case of a college girl referred to this writer for counseling. She had been having occasional depressions with crying, outcroppings of mild anxiety, vague uneasiness and restlessness and dissatisfaction. It was not difficult for her to link these reactions intellectually to the deaths of her father, mother, and sister in an automobile accident when she was driving. But why anxiety and depression almost two years later? She had received multiple serious injuries from the accident and had been in the hospital for several months, actually out of touch with the reality of the situation for weeks, unable to attend the funeral, with total attention taken up with her own pain and disability. When finally she left the hospital, she was "accustomed" to the separation, and full grieving had never been accomplished. The affect of the grief was now being expressed and experienced as overt anxiety and depression.

The reality of anxiety in grief is a conclusion that can be reached because of various types of reports from and observations of grief sufferers themselves.

Evidence from psychotherapy. Second, there is strong cumulative evidence from the observations of therapists. Deutsch has spoken of the replacement of normal mourning by a state of severe anxiety in neurotic patients.³¹ This

³¹Deutsch, op. cit., p. 13.

could be logically judged as being simply the adding of anxiety to anxiety, separation fear cued off by the death of an emotionally related person laid upon a person who already operated at a high level of anxiety. Deutsch saw grief as attacking the integrity of the ego, one response to which is regression to infantile anxiety,³² which, of course, in its signal effect is precisely the same perception, threat to the ego.

Anderson follows this same line of thought, defining anxiety as the ego's signal of threat to its existence, and going on to say that the ego incorporates into itself that which threatens it and that for which it mourns. Absence of the object of value equals anxiety; it also equals grief.³³ Whether called grief or anxiety, it matters not; when the affect is expressed overtly it is an anxiety state.

Klein actually identifies anxiety and grief by simply calling the separation experiences of the infant which others have termed anxiety, "infantile mourning", and stating that adult mourning can be understood as a reproduction of analogous separation experiences.³⁴ The death

³²Ibid., p. 16

³³Charles Anderson, "Aspects of Pathological Grief and Mourning," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXX (1949), 49-50.

³⁴Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXI (1940), 126.

of a loved person is the stimulus reactivating earlier experiences of separation which are now experienced as present threats.³⁵ Grief and anxiety, according to her, are identical experiences of separation fear.

Bowlby makes the most emphatic statement of all growing out of his clinical work: "Separation anxiety, grief and mourning, and defense are phases of a single process...."³⁶ There seems to be no difference between separation from the mother on the part of the child and the separation by the death of an emotionally significant person on the part of an adult.³⁷ Bowlby feels that the child's separation anxiety ought clearly to be designated by its true name of grief. Absence and death are identical psychic experiences for a person.³⁸

Identity of behavioral responses. A third reason for stating that the anxiety state is central in grief is because behavioral reactions to both can be isolated and seen as essentially the same.

The purpose of the psychological defense or adjustive mechanisms to anxiety has been stated as that of

³⁵Ibid., p. 136.

³⁶John Bowlby, "Grief and Mourning in Infancy and Childhood," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, XV (1960), 9.

³⁷Ibid., p. 10. ³⁸Ibid., p. 16.

reducing the painful affect of anxiety by denying or distorting reality in some way. These same mechanisms can be seen operating in grief in the same manner toward the same end.

Anderson stated in the context of his apparent identifying of anxiety and grief that just as in the former, some people develop neurotic and even psychotic symptoms when the intense affect of morbid grief has not been ab-reacted.³⁹

Fulcomer in his thorough cataloging of the behavior of the grief stricken has observed apathy and emotional insulation or detachment, depression, self-blame, projection of blame onto others, displaced hostility, identification with the role and/or characteristics of the deceased, repression of affect, phantasy involving an idealized image of the other and the relationship which existed, sublimation through activity in groups and causes, substitution of relationships.⁴⁰

Fulcomer's observations are corroborated by Eliot who has reported a rejection of reality, a sense of unreality, detachment, repression, self-blame, projection,

³⁹Anderson, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁰David Fulcomer, "The Adjustive Behavior of Some Recently Bereaved Spouses: a Psycho-Sociological Study" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., 1942), pp. 87-159.

compensation, rationalization, identification with the deceased, transference, and substitution.⁴¹ Lindemann also spoke of observing an activated phantasy life concerning the deceased, displaced hostility, identification, a sense of unreality, emotional distance from others, and an apathy so great as to appear to be almost schizophrenic in nature.⁴²

As indicated earlier, Deutsch has mentioned regression as one of the mechanisms of defense, but showing that regression takes one back to infantile anxiety.⁴³ The adult is no longer a child, but part of the child is in every adult. It has been explained above how helplessness is learned by the infant in the situation of increased pain in the absence of the mothering one. The adult who is confronted by the death of an emotionally significant person has the experience of total frustration and helplessness to fulfill the desire to sustain the physical presence of the deceased. So the same separation anxiety, the perception of one's helplessness in the face of threat to the self, of which the infant's first separation experiences

⁴¹Thomas D. Eliot, "The Bereaved Family," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CLX (1932), pp. 185-86.

⁴²Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September, 1963), 9-10, 12-15.

⁴³Deutsch, op. cit., p. 16.

were the prototype, is set off. Yet one response to contemporary anxieties is to escape to the security patterns of earlier years, regression.

The question arises as to whether this is not perhaps the first mechanism that usually operates in grief-anxiety, with the subsequent overt behavior and mechanisms being a reflection of the earlier security patterns of that particular person: apathy, withdrawal, identification, phantasy.

Also, in view of the fact that death means the removal of the physical presence of an emotionally meaningful person, would not regression mean reverting to the behavior of the child which he utilized to hold the significant other near, namely, talking? In Chapter VI it was seen that language was learned in a highly emotionally charged interpersonal situation in such a way that the learning to speak words was temporally contiguous with the process of identification with the parents. It was concluded that one of the meanings of the child's verbalizing was his sense of maintaining the strength of his own ego by drawing and holding the parents near. The words were the substitution for presence; emotionally they meant the same.

Orlansky has said that talking is a way of relieving

anxiety.⁴⁴ This is a rather common observation. But outside of being a form of physical activity which does literally relieve physical tension, why should it relieve anxiety? Orlansky states that it is because of its social meaning.⁴⁵ It is true that one of the major needs of the grief-stricken is social intercourse, communication, but this is not the first conscious purpose of talking at the time of bereavement. The concept of holding the significant other emotionally near at a time when separation takes place or is threatened is the key. Increased talking has been reported as a response in the situation of grief not only by Orlansky, but also by Lindemann,⁴⁶ with the interpretation in another place that communication of remembered experiences with the deceased is the emotional equivalent of reliving them.⁴⁷

After the tension of anxiety is relieved, and even while the process is going on, of course, the regressive tendency of talking is also the means of maintaining contemporary relationships and establishing new ones, which

⁴⁴Harold Orlansky, "Reactions to the Death of President Roosevelt," Journal of Social Psychology, XXVI (1947), 233, 254.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 253.

⁴⁶Lindemann, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴⁷Lloyd E. Foster, et al., "Grief," Pastoral Psychology, I (June, 1950), 30.

is ultimately necessary for the healing of grief and re-entering life.

Other than the mental mechanisms, several writers have included forms of overt behavior as responses of grief. Talking as an act of tension reduction has already been discussed in relation to regression, and it was earlier suggested that perhaps any response to grief-anxiety which is observed is a regressive behavior pattern. Hypomania as a global response has also been observed, almost continuous and on the whole meaningless activity and excitement.⁴⁸ The direct action of escape from the situation through withdrawal, social isolation, is also common.⁴⁹

Other aspects of overt behavior are the physical responses in the first reaction to grief which are those which also noted in an acute anxiety attack: not only crying, but tightening of the throat, sensation of a load on one's chest, disturbances of breathing such as gulping, gasping, sighing, the feeling of suffocating; inability to eat, no appetite, food seeming to stick in the throat; frequent excitation of bowels and kidneys; either physical exhaustion or agitation.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Fulcomer, op. cit., pp. 105, 119; Lindemann, op. cit., p. 10; Bowlby, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁹Eliot, op. cit., p. 186; Lindemann, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁰Lindemann, op. cit., p. 9.

Two forms of illness often seem to result from grief just as they do from anxiety. A third form might even be noted as a possibility. One of these is neurotic in nature and the second is psychosomatic. The former is the result of the mechanism of identification, in which the dynamics of this mechanism, already operating in the relationship, are intensified by the increased anxiety brought about by the separation by death, and the bereaved begins to exhibit symptoms related to the final illness of the deceased.⁵¹ Cases of this nature have been reported by Brewster, who reports the case of a woman who developed shortness of breath and a feeling of suffocation following her brother's death,⁵² and Creegan, who presented the case of the boy who had an onset of psychogenic "heart attacks" of a hysterical nature following the death of his mother.⁵³ This writer also did extensive counseling with a male college student, one of whose two major symptoms was the inability to get his breath, the feeling of suffocating, sometimes relatively mild but not infrequently to the point of panic. His father had been dead some eight years at the time, but

⁵¹Ibid., p. 10.

⁵²Henry B. Brewster, "Grief: a Disrupted Human Relationship," Human Organization, IX (1950), 116.

⁵³Robert F. Creegan, "A Symbolic Action During Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXVII (1942), 403-05.

the young man still remembered visiting his sick bed a few times during a lingering illness, at which time the father had had breathing difficulties. The symptoms of the student began to clear up when after about two months of counseling he spent all of two consecutive sessions weeping, with deep, body-racking sobs and deep sighing, as he recounted and now relived feelings toward his father.

The second form of illness which can be seen occasionally rising out of anxiety-grief is psychosomatic, or psychophysiological. This differs from the first in that in psychophysiological illness there is actual organ pathology. Both Garre and Engel have briefly laid the groundwork for this understanding of illness, the former in relation to a discussion of anxiety, the latter in a discussion of grief. Garre has pointed out that anxiety as such is intolerable to human experience, and that the affect constantly seeks to be converted into a more bearable form, and somatic illness is one of these.⁵⁴ He later mentions colitis specifically as a reaction to anxiety, which is to be thought of as fear of abandonment.⁵⁵ Lindemann, too, has singled out colitis as an illustration of a psychosomatic illness related to grief. In a study of forty-one patients with the disorder, he noted that thirty-three of them had developed the disease closely following the loss

⁵⁴Garre, op. cit., p. 5. ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 8.

of an emotionally significant person.⁵⁶ Stern has discovered in an investigation of grief in later life that among the elderly there is a tendency to exhibit fewer of certain other types of symptoms but that there is a preponderance of somatic illness.⁵⁷ As a physician, Engel has observed the occurrence of grief immediately preceeding illness, and he has declared that this ought not to be thought of as coincidental.⁵⁸

The third form of illness which might well be related to the grief reaction, as it is also suggested as a possible consequence of intense anxiety, is physiogenic (organic) illness, in which the grief-anxiety plays at least a preconditioning role. Garre said that anxiety ought not to be overlooked as an influential factor in lowering the body's resistance to germs and viruses.⁵⁹ Engel states it in relation to grief, saying that it is possible that biochemical or physiological processes associated with grief may become the condition for more serious somatic changes.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Lindemann, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁷Karl Stern, et al., "Grief Reactions in Later Life," American Journal of Psychiatry, CVIII (1951), 289.

⁵⁸George L. Engel, "Is Grief a Disease?" Psychosomatic Medicine, XXIII (1961), 20-21.

⁵⁹Garre, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶⁰Engel, op. cit., p. 21.

Perhaps more than coincidentally the young college man cited above as exhibiting identification with the symptoms of his dead father, within a year or so after the death of his father contracted tuberculosis. The TB was thoroughly arrested within the year, and it was then that the symptoms of breathing disturbances arose, with one medical examination after another failing to find any further organic pathology.

Just as ego defense mechanisms, overt behavior of escape and tension reduction, physical symptoms and even illness are seen as reactions to anxiety with a view to the reduction of the subjective experience of pain following an early learned pattern of pain avoidance, so also should many of the behavioral responses of the bereaved be understood as defenses against perceived threats to the ego.

Summary Argument in Defense of the Thesis

Perhaps the best summary of the total process involved in the situations of separation anxiety and grief which lead to the conclusion that grief cannot be understood apart from an analysis of anxiety has been made by Bowlby, and his arguments were recounted in detail in Chapter III. The responses to both separation from the mother by the child and loss of a loved object through death by an adult included self-blame (guilt), displaced hostility, appeals for help (frequently accompanied by the

rejection of offers of aid), withdrawal, despair, regression, inertia, sense of emptiness, loss of organized social patterns of activity, but finally with the reorganization of behavior directed toward a new object.⁶¹

The positive argument for declaring the thesis that acute anxiety reaction is the major dynamic factor in grief and that much of the experiences and behavior noted in grief are in the same category as the various attempted defenses against and escape from anxiety are: first, the subjective experiences are reported to be the same by many who have undergone them; second, the formulations of therapists who have had clinical experience with the separation anxiety of children and who have worked with children and adults in grief identify the two as being essentially the same; and third, the mechanisms of defense, the behavior of escape and avoidance, the physical symptoms, and other behavior accompanying and following the two can be recognized as the same in form and purpose.

IV. SUMMARY

The thesis that separation anxiety is the core experience and the major dynamic element in grief has been developed by seeking to elaborate the infant's learning to fear the absence of the mothering one, beginning with

⁶¹Bowlby, op. cit., pp. 17-20.

his global experience of pain, discomfort, increased tension, broken by experiences of comfort and satisfaction when the significant other is present and mothering behavior is being performed. The absence of the mother is learned to be the equivalent of the anticipation of increased tension, pain, that has been experienced and is now remembered, because of the infant's learned sense of helplessness and dependence. This becomes the prototype experience whose painful affect is triggered by continuing experiences of separation from significant others. The central value of meaningful relationships with others as a means of sustaining one's own being is learned in this interpersonal matrix. To be separated from emotionally important persons is perceived as a threat to the self. This is anxiety, a separation fear.

Arguments presented in behalf of the thesis were based on the evidence of subjective reports that the experience "feels like" fear, on the observation of therapists whose clinical background led them to equate the two separations on the basis of the development of the personality and the nature and dynamics of separation, and on the identity of the mechanisms of escape and distortion of reality which are common to both.

CHAPTER VIII

MORAL ANXIETY (GUILT) IN GRIEF

It would be difficult to add original insights to the mass of literature dealing with guilt. It has already been seen in the review of the literature that almost every writer has in some way referred to guilt as being involved in the grief reaction. What has not been clearly and explicitly stated in those contexts is that guilt is a form of anxiety, although this is a common enough idea in other psychological, psychoanalytical, and psychiatric writing.

The relation of guilt to grief has been understood in one of two ways, depending upon the definition of grief itself. Where grief was assumed to be a term applied to a complex of several interacting emotions occasioned by the death of a person to whom one has been emotionally related, guilt was simply listed as one of the several possible emotions which combined to produce a total affect. Where grief was spoken of in such a way that it seemed to be a separate and distinguishable emotion per se, guilt was discussed, usually along with hostility, as being an additional emotion which was operating as a complicating factor in the situation.

The purpose of this chapter is merely to point out that guilt as a form of anxiety is reinforcing to the

separation anxiety of grief. Therefore when guilt and grief are discussed in relation to one another, the meaning is that of anxiety added to anxiety, and that guilt also has its origin in a separation fear. The role of hostility will be presented as being involved in the generation of the guilt.

I. GUILT AS MORAL ANXIETY

Sigmund Freud

Freud laid the groundwork for the understanding of guilt as anxiety. The super-ego is described as coming into being as a result of the growing intensity of the male child's object-cathexis of the mother and his perception of his father as an obstacle to his sexual wishes. The earlier identification with the father now includes in it the desire to get rid of him, creating an ambivalent relation. The resolution of this complex should ordinarily take place through increased identification with the father. At the same time there is also an element of identification with the mother and some ambivalence toward her. The general outcome of this situation is the forming of an aspect of the ego, the super-ego, which consists of some combination of these two identifications.¹ This is the source

¹Sigmund Freud, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works (New York: Macmillan, 1961), XIX, 31-34.

of feelings of guilt, the criticism of the ego by the super-ego. When the latter is particularly severe, its condemnation of the ego is quite painful and the ego responds with repression. As a matter of fact, much guilt must ordinarily remain unconscious because of its origin in the Oedipus complex, which is unconscious.²

The nature of this guilt is no different from any other threat which the ego perceives. There is danger from the external world, from the strength of the id, and from the severity of the ego. "Three kinds of anxiety correspond to these three dangers, since anxiety is the expression of a retreat from danger."³ In the same way that a danger from the outside seems to threaten the existence of the ego, so the strong super-ego is also perceived as an annihilating force, the response to which is fear, anxiety, which in this latter case is called guilt. In the midst of the Oedipus situation the major fear of the child is that of castration by the father, the higher being. With the internalization of the father there is also the introjection of his punishing behavior of castration. This forms the affective nucleus, dread of castration, which continues as fear of conscience, or guilt.⁴

²Ibid., XIX, 51-52. ³Ibid., XIX, 56.

⁴Ibid., XIX, 57.

Freud goes on to make a significant comment concerning the ego: "To the ego, therefore, living means the same as being loved...."⁵ This includes being loved by the super-ego in the same way that it meant being loved by the mother and father prior to their internalization. Thus, the severe criticism of the ego has the same meaning as castration, the withdrawal of the loving support of the significant persons at a time of dependence upon them.

Here, moreover, is once again the same situation as that which underlay the first great anxiety-state of birth and the infantile anxiety of longing for an absent person — the anxiety of separation from the protecting mother.⁶

So Freud has come to the point of saying that in the person in whom there operates some level of anxiety, the fear of separation from the significant other, there is the dynamic, affective residue of another experience where separation has been threatened, the Oedipus situation. Fear of the super-ego in this case is called guilt. It is also a separation anxiety, of the same nature as anxiety in its original experiences. He goes on to make more explicit the concept of separation contained in the formulation of feelings of guilt as an extension of the punishment of castration by showing that the value of the penis is that it is the organ which the male child understands that he needs in order to obtain union with the mother, therefore

⁵Ibid., XIX, 58. ⁶Ibid., XIX.

its loss is perceived as separation from her.⁷

One other important aspect of the dynamics of the super-ego is the perception by the ego that the original threats of punishment through loss of love would not be forthcoming were it not for the instinctual impulses that were felt by the child and which sought for expression. "Thus such instinctual impulses are determinants of external dangers and so become dangerous in themselves...."⁸ Even the desire to act sexually or aggressively brings the ego's perception of loss of the object-cathexis or punishment by father. Even in adults, to some degree, certain situations cause the ego to react as if the old danger situations still existed, and it responds with anxiety.⁹

Freud identified guilt and anxiety, saying that economically the threat of punishment by the super-ego, the introjected father, is perceived by the ego as other threats to its existence, centering about experiences of separation from the loved object, to which threat the ego responds with the signal of anxiety.

Paul Tillich

A contemporary writer who speaks of guilt in terms of anxiety is Paul Tillich. Man's being is both given to him and demanded of him. He is not responsible for having

⁷Ibid., XX, 139. ⁸Ibid., XX, 145.

⁹Ibid., XX, 147.

caused himself to exist, but once existing, in his freedom he is responsible for what he makes of himself and for the judging of the product. This is the situation out of which the anxiety of guilt arises. As a person makes his decisions, he is in the process of moral self-affirmation. But he has the power, and actually exercises it, to act in contradiction to his self-affirmation and the fulfillment of his destiny. When the person becomes aware of the ambiguity of his own actions, it is subjectively experienced as guilt, and it is present every moment.¹⁰ The realization of one's own acts towards self-negation drives one toward self-rejection, "the despair of having lost our destiny."¹¹ This guilt is one of the three major forms of anxiety in which non-being threatens being, by threatening man's moral self-affirmation, relatively in terms of guilt and absolutely in terms of condemnation.¹²

As an existential statement of the experiences and situation of man, Tillich is penetratingly descriptive. However, from the point of view of psychology his description must be judged as an inappropriate model on the basis of its neglect of some concept of learning and its development within an interpersonal matrix and of the intrapsychic

¹⁰Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 51-52.

¹¹Ibid., p. 53. ¹²Ibid., p. 41.

dynamics of the affect. Even some of the terminology itself, although apparently meaningful in presenting philosophical categories, does not have precise meaning in psychology.

However, both Freud and Tillich (and numerous others) identify guilt as being anxiety, and they agree as to its universal presence in human experience. Freud clearly sees it as separation fear, and Tillich perceives it as being involved in alienation.

Experimental Evidence

To what extent is the identification of guilt and anxiety a valid viewpoint? Can it be upheld empirically? Can the process be described in terms which are not bound to the physiological instinctual conceptuality or to the philosophical terminology of existentialism which does not lend itself readily to psychological investigation?

Lowe has observed that there have been theoretical discussions linking guilt and anxiety but that there have been few empirical studies. The question arose for him when in the course of an investigation a correlation of .94 was obtained between the Pt scale on the MMPI and a measure of subjective guilt feelings which he had devised. He felt that this result cast some doubt on the ability to distinguish between feelings of guilt and the anxiety reflected by the Pt scale. To study this relationship fur-

ther a new guilt scale was devised from MMPI items and it, along with the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale, was administered to seventy psychiatric patients and seventy male and seventy female psychiatric aide applicants. Since only six items on the two scales overlapped, it was assumed that the scale items were selected in terms of two separate psychological constructs: guilt and anxiety. Results showed correlations between the two scales of .82, .66, and .74 respectively for the three groups of subjects, with the overall correlation being .75. After using the formula for attenuation due to imperfect test reliability the correlation was increased to .93. Lowe concluded that the "most parsimonious explanation is that self-report measures of anxiety and guilt comprise the same psychological entity...."¹³ The two are equivalent, and any distinction between them is to be viewed either as a result of prior conceptual set or simply of terminology.

The Interpersonal Approach

The central value of one's life is seen as being in relation to another. The super-ego, or conscience, or whatever term might be appropriately chosen to refer to the introjected part aspects of the significant others,

¹³C. Marshall Lowe, "The Equivalence of Guilt and Anxiety as Psychological Constructs," Journal of Consulting Psychology, XXVIII (1964), 554.

the rewarding and punishing behavior of the parents, clearly takes form in the context of the child's seeking to gain and maintain the love and approval of those upon whom he has learned to be dependent as a self. Although learning theory has many complexities about it, it remains generally true that behavior which is rewarded (need fulfilled, tension reduced) tends to be stamped in and behavior which is punished (directly through pain in some form or which is not rewarded or gratified and thus allows for increase of tension) tends to be extinguished. The first perceptions of the rewarding and punishing behavior of the parents are linked with their basic physiological need-fulfilling behavior toward the infant. As time passes, and with the maintenance of the dependency relationship, their approval and disapproval is interpreted as reward and punishment. Behavior which signals their approval is learned. It is also learned that other behavior signals their disapproval. This behavior is perceived to be threatening to the relationship, and thereby threatening to one's self, which cannot be first understood as secure and separate, apart from the parent. McKenzie put it: "...the need for security and safety is awakened at the same time it is jeopardized."¹⁴ The need and the threat are learned

¹⁴John G. McKenzie, Guilt: Its Meaning and Significance (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 31.

conjointly. The perception of this danger of separation is what was defined in the last chapter as anxiety, and which here is called guilt simply because that which threatens the relationship is one's own behavior, or his failure to behave in a certain way, or even his thinking or feeling forbidden, disapproved behavior. Therefore, "the anxiety of guilt is just this anxiety of being loved no longer."¹⁵ The identifications with the parents, i.e., the learning of approved and disapproved behavior along with the strong affect created by the situation of intense need, comprise the original foundation upon which the anxiety of guilt is built.

Tournier emphasizes the inter- as well as the intra-personal nature of guilt-anxiety. Recognizing the validity of Tillich's approach, he speaks of the refusal to develop one's full selfhood or to assume one's proper responsibility in a situation as issuing in the "guilt of self toward self," and the actual violation of human relationships as a "guilt toward others."¹⁶ Yet even in this "true" guilt, that not of a neurotic nature, there is always a residue of the infantile origin of guilt-anxiety, always "a little of the fear of losing the love and esteem of others, which

¹⁵Paul Tournier, Guilt and Grace (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 189.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 65.

constituted infantile guilt,"¹⁷ or anxiety.

It should be clear that these are not guilt-anxiety feelings which arise for the first time out of the Oedipus situation, or out of whatever personal interaction there is between father-mother and child if one does not accept the literal Freudian statement of it. Rather, guilt-anxiety begins to take form with the first experiences of the child as they were described in Chapter VII. It was stated that the first internalization is that of the mother, as she as the external ego becomes the core of the internal ego. Not only is her accepting and need-fulfilling behavior internalized as a part of the infant's primitive perception of himself, but so also is her punishing and disapproving behavior, including her leaving, the experiences of her absence. This is the primitive super-ego. Thus the psychic force which produces the subjective experience of guilt is the introjected leaving (punishing, rejecting)-needed mother and the punishing-needed father, precisely the terms in which anxiety was described as developing in the previous chapter. Guilt is anxiety, fear of separation from those upon whom one depends for his selfhood.

II. HOSTILITY, AMBIVALENCE, AND GUILT

Not only has guilt been spoken of as being frequent-

¹⁷Ibid., p. 91.

ly (or universally, depending upon the writer) observed as involved in grief, but so also has hostility. Rarely is this hostility directed overtly toward the deceased. It is usually either turned inward upon the grief sufferer himself or toward others related to the situation. Occasionally this hostility may, as Zilboorg has suggested, be a defensive measure to counteract the fear felt, and without any real object to direct it against, the bereaved expresses it toward any available person.¹⁸

However, the point to be made here is that some degree of hostility has always been involved in the relationship with the deceased and that in more than one way this in itself is productive of guilt-anxiety.

The first part of the task is to show the origin of ambivalence as a universal human experience, and the second is to demonstrate that hostility is productive of guilt-anxiety.

The Universality of Ambivalence

If there were a mother who was perfectly loving, without any anxiety at all herself, who consistently met every need of the infant and small child, and who never frustrated the self-expressions of the developing self, it might be assumed that this mother's child might not develop

¹⁸Gregory Zilboorg, "Fear of Death," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XII (1943), 473-74.

elements of hatred, hostility, and aggression in the relationship. To the degree that the mother is not this, to that degree will there be such negative emotions mixed with the positive responses. Macmurray assumes the absolute need of the child for the mother as it has been elaborated in this work and therefore the strong motivation of the child to do whatever she requires, even though it be perceived in opposition to his own developing selfhood.¹⁹ If the mother's behavior is not need-fulfilling, then there is the learned perception of threat to the self. The experience is the same as "Mother does not love me," or even, "Mother is against me." The response to this is, "then I am against her," aggression.²⁰ It should be noted that this feeling of aggression toward the mother does not always issue in direct aggressive behavior, but might be dealt with by any one of a number of mechanisms. Yet it is there and a part of the relationship. The mother's task is to enable the child to see his judgment as an illusion. To the degree that she cannot, and falls short of perfection as stated above, the judgment is not an illusion. Therefore, the child's first and most important relationship is always established upon mixed motivation, ambivalent feel-

¹⁹John Macmurray, Persons in Relation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 98-99.

²⁰Ibid., p. 100.

ings. It always contains the element of the fear of withdrawal of support and the aggression against the frustrating mother, mixed with the positive affect of trust and love.²¹ There is then "fear for oneself in relation to the Other, and the defence of oneself against the threat from the Other."²²

Ambivalence, including hostility and aggression, is inevitably a motivating force in every meaningful relationship, growing out of the original most significant relation with the mother and the inability of any person to fulfill consistently all of the pressing needs of another, arousing fear of loss of support and a tendency toward aggression. It now needs to be shown that this aggression itself, rising out of the fear of separation, further threatens the relationship, creating guilt-anxiety.

The Relationship of Hostility to Guilt

It must be remembered that the real danger is the loss of meaningful relationship with another person, a relationship which one has learned is necessary for his own selfhood, the integrity, wholeness, and life of oneself. The separation from another with whom one has been emotionally linked, where some degree of identification has taken place, is perceived as self-loss, the disintegration

²¹Ibid., pp. 101-03. ²²Ibid., p. 104.

of one's self. The response to this is anxiety.

An internal drive, whatever it may be, is not inherently, in and of itself, to be feared. At the same time, Freud has already been quoted as showing how the expression of instinctual impulses would be a determinant of an external danger to the ego, and therefore these impulses come to be felt as dangerous in themselves. Horney has picked up this insight, but has moved away from the instinctual bias and the exclusively sexual emphasis and terminology to what would seem to be a more appropriate conceptuality for an understanding of grief and other areas of human experience. Recognizing that there are psychic conditions which can create a feeling of danger to a person and at the same time an attitude of helplessness toward it, Horney indicates that any impulse has the potential power to stimulate anxiety if its discovery or expression would conflict with other vital interests or needs.²³ The thesis of this present work has already made clear its emphasis on meaningful relations with others as being a central learned value of human life. Horney posits hostile impulses as being the most prevalent of impulses which would be perceived as a threat to this stated value,

²³Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (New York: Norton, 1937), pp. 61-62.

and therefore as being the main source of anxiety.²⁴ The very meaning of hostility and its expression implies a moving against another, inherently involving threat of separation. It should be admitted that this is not wholly unrealistic, for on the whole people in most cultures have not learned to deal constructively with overt aggression without the modification, at least temporarily, of one's perception of the relationship as being one which is stable and secure. The expression of hostility usually carries with it the reaction of breach of relations. Thus, it produces anxiety, for, as Horney has observed, "one may love or need a person at the same time that one is hostile toward him...."²⁵ Either the perception of the hostility by the other is interpreted by the hostile person as meaning rejection by the loved and needed one, or the feelings of hostility are in conflict with the learned idealized image of oneself and therefore felt as threatening to the self which it is necessary to be in order to have the approval of others. These are ways of expressing the same events in the developmental process. The first expressions of aggression by the infant and small child are met with disapproval and suppressive measures. The fear on the part of the child that the needed relationship is being broken is met by the repression of the

²⁴Ibid., p. 63. ²⁵Ibid., p. 66.

feelings and the learning that one is not really a person who feels hostility.

Such repression of hostility intensifies the anxiety, because it reinforces the feeling being defenseless against threat by robbing a person of the impulses he actually needs to cope with threat.²⁶ This anxiety is what is spoken of when one uses the term guilt. One learns to "feel guilty" over the feelings and expression of hostility by the punishment, disapproval, and perceived, if not actual, withdrawal of support by the parents upon whom one has learned to be wholly dependent. This fear of loss of support, being a punishment which is temporally contiguous with the expression of hostility, is a response which is stamped in, to be cued off in the future by even the feeling of hostility, the desire for aggression. The desire for the infant and small child is not distinguishable from the act, so the punishment received for the act is feared when the desire alone is present. This is a part of the introjection of parental attitude toward the child which is called the super-ego, from which springs the feeling called guilt, one's own judgment that hostility is to be feared because it means loss of relationship.

Hostility, which inevitably arises out of the interaction in any close, meaningful emotional relationship,

²⁶Ibid., p. 64.

thus creating ambivalent feelings, further threatens the relationship and is productive of guilt-anxiety. Guilt, then, as anxiety is inescapable as an aspect of the anxiety of grief itself.

III. GUILT AND GRIEF

Tournier has stated that "there is no grave beside which a flood of guilt feelings does not assail the mind."²⁷ His observation is merely a summary of the reports of many writers on grief. But precisely how is guilt seen as an integral part of the grief reaction?

The Dynamic Source of Guilt in Grief

It has been stated above that ambivalent feelings are involved in all relationships; it was further shown that the hostile feelings are productive of guilt. Therefore, there are areas of every meaningful interpersonal relationship that are colored by guilt-anxiety. When the death of an emotionally significant person occurs, guilt-anxiety is triggered in a number of ways.

Regression. First, as a reaction to the stress of the situation, the separation anxiety aroused, there is a tendency toward regression, as discussed in Chapter VII. This regression takes one back emotionally to more primitive

²⁷Tournier, op. cit., p. 93.

behavioral responses; one is closer to the origin of his emotional behavior, and there is the tendency to feel unworthy in one's own eyes in regard to hostile feelings subjectively experienced and/or expressed. The primitive super-ego accuses one of being responsible for breaking the relationship. In this instance, the guilt anxiety operating is not necessarily related to the hostile impulses toward the deceased. Rather, the separation anxiety stimulated by the death activates the mechanism of regression, which allows the bereaved to feel the threat and punishment for his ambivalent feelings toward the original significant others. Out of the regressive tendencies can even arise additional feelings of hostility and anxiety as the death of the other is interpreted as desertion by him.

Identification of wish and act. Second, it was related above that the unconscious does not perceive the difference between wish and act. This situation has come about because of the preverbal and even preconceptual learning of the arousal of fear of separation as a result of having aggressive feelings, because parental disapproval of aggressive behavior is expressed toward the infant and small child. Thus the residue of parataxic reasoning allows one to feel that his hostile wishes against the other have somehow been causally related to the separation,

later the death. Again, one feels responsible for the act which has broken the relationship, so there is guilt-anxiety. But since this feeling of responsibility is painful, it is dealt with by repression or some other mechanism. It should be emphasized that there is no "real" or "true" guilt at this point, only guilt feelings rising out of early learned patterns of responding.

Violation of relationship. However, such real guilt should not be overlooked as an important factor in much grief. This is the third manner in which guilt-anxiety is constitutive of grief. Certainly in most relationships there have been elements of the violation of the other which Tournier referred to as a value guilt, "a guilt toward others," having its source in our failure as persons in our responsibility toward them, a person's "consciousness of having betrayed an authentic standard."²⁸

At this point there should be some modification of the earlier statement that irrational guilt feelings arise out of the early learning to intensify the anxiety of grief, and that in these feelings there is no true guilt, true guilt presupposing responsibility. The acceptance of the fact that hostile feelings are universal does not mean that an individual is entirely blameless in regard to the

²⁸Ibid., pp. 64-65.

intensity of those feelings and the degree to which they are actually productive of alienation within the relationship. To the degree that aggressive feelings are nourished and cultivated and used to destroy the other as a person, there is true guilt, the responsibility for violating the other.

Anyone who has been involved in a large number of grief situations has heard the bereaved searching back through the history of the relationship and recounting words and acts that wronged the other and the failures to minister adequately to the needs of the other. Although this process is obviously intensified, occasionally even to the degree of morbidity, by unconscious factors already mentioned, the influence of genuine guilt itself should not be minimized. Things do go wrong in a relationship; guilt-anxiety is felt, and appropriately so.

It would seem that real guilt is intensified and brought to awareness with greater force at the time of the death of the other because the death cuts off opportunities for atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation. The bereaved finds his need for forgiveness, the healing of the broken aspects of the relationship, frustrated, and he is faced with the prospect of having to live with his guilt. There seems to be no way of working through the ambivalent feelings.

Mowrer has spoken of the reality of the attitudes

and behavior which violate the learned social strictures which are necessary for harmonious living with one another. Guilt is the learned fear of punishment which comes with their violation. Flight from the guilt is ordinarily impossible, although it can be repressed, producing even greater anxiety. Therefore, the healthier way of dealing with the situation of guilt is to accept its punishment and use it as a stimulus to become more responsible and more mature.²⁹

Inability to perform social role. Another possible source of guilt at the time of the death of a person very close to one is referred to by Volkart. There is a social expectation of a particular role that the bereaved should play. Yet the ambivalent feelings of the bereaved may prevent his completely performing this role. His social fear may be so strong that his failure to do so may be felt as guilt-anxiety.³⁰

The Expressions of Guilt in Grief

These are some of the ways in which the anxiety of guilt is involved as an integral part of the grief-anxiety

²⁹O. H. Mowrer, "Pain, Punishment and Anxiety," Anxiety, Paul Hoch and Joseph Zubin, eds. (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1950), p. 36.

³⁰Edmund H. Volkart, "Bereavement and Mental Health," Explorations in Social Psychiatry, Alexander H. Leighton, et al., eds. (New York: Basic Books, 1957), pp. 297-98.

reaction. How does this guilt express itself; how is it observed and reported?

Subjective experience. First, one must not ignore the obvious. People often consciously feel the guilt and they themselves report it. There are self-recriminations for real or supposed wrongs done to the deceased and expressions of failure to be responsible to the person. This is all conscious, though not denying unconscious dynamics at work. In fact, the grief-stricken person may even be aware of the irrational nature of the strength of the feelings, yet they are clearly present and identifiable by him.

Hostility. A second way in which guilt-anxiety is seen operating in the bereaved is through the expression of hostility. It has been shown that ambivalent emotions are in all close relationships and that hostility is productive of guilt. To be sure, in many instances this is not a major complicating factor. Nevertheless, when hostility in any of its forms is exhibited noticeably in the bereaved, the anxiety of guilt is involved. As was stated earlier, this hostility is seldom directed toward the deceased; most of the time this would not be compatible with one's self image or society's expected role and would be too anxiety producing. Therefore, the aggressive behavior is either displaced onto other persons within the situation

or turned inward upon oneself.

Behavior ranging from irritability in general to overt aggression toward specific other persons is a relatively common observation in bereavement.³¹ This is frequently linked with a hypomanic response on the part of the bereaved, and points to an underlying anger or hostility. Becker has listed a category of bereavement reaction as excited, and notes that aggressive behavior and an underlying anger is present.³² The psychiatric category of hypomania is mentioned in bereavement by Anderson, who says that it is frequently seen as a temporary phase of normal grief.³³ Irritability, aggression, and outbursts of temper are a part of the clinical picture of hypomania, which is listed as a sub-classification of the affective disorders. This behavior can be understood in two ways. First, as Stern suggests, it is the projection of the hated aspects of the dead person onto available living persons.³⁴

³¹John Bowlby, "Grief and Mourning in Infancy and Early Childhood," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, XV (1960), 17; Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September, 1963), 14; Karl Stern, "Grief Reactions in Later Life," American Journal of Psychiatry, CVIII (1951), 289.

³²Howard Becker, "The Sorrow of Bereavement," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXVII (1933), 395.

³³Charles Anderson, "Aspects of Pathological Grief and Mourning," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXX (1949), 54.

³⁴Stern, op. cit., p. 293.

Since the object is gone, there is displacement of hostility. Second, the self-accusations of guilt-anxiety over the hostile feelings are intolerable, so the feelings of self loathing are projected outward onto others. Either way, it is a hostility-guilt-anxiety crisis that the individual is seeking to deal with and against which he must defend his self-structure. Any mania is probably a mechanism to ward off the intolerable feelings of worthlessness, guilt, self-blame, which are a part of depression, and it is not uncommon for a depression to follow closely a manic phase of behavior.³⁵

A more common response to the dynamics of hostility-guilt in grief is to turn the aggression inward upon one-self as depression. Fulcomer found elements of depression in many of the responses of grief in the immediate, post-immediate, and transitional stages, with responses of self-blame, despair, dejection, non-activity, inattention to external stimuli, self-absorption, detachment, feelings of exhaustion, occasionally with weeping, but frequently with little or no weeping.³⁶ These are among the symptoms of the clinical picture of depression. It is well accepted

³⁵James C. Coleman, Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life (3rd ed.: New York: Scott, Foresman, 1964), p. 335.

³⁶David M. Fulcomer, "The Adjustive Behavior of Some Recently Bereaved Spouses," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., 1962), pp. 96, 110, 119, 127.

that there is in the background of this response a severe childhood discipline, a punitive super-ego, especially in the area of the prevention of the overt expression of hostility. Especially pertinent to the situation of grief is the element of hostility toward former love objects.³⁷

Apparently his (the depressive's) rigid conscience leads to an introjective reaction to his life difficulties, and the hostility aroused by his frustrations and failures is turned inward toward the self rather than being directed toward the outside world....³⁸

This, of course, is not a new idea. Abraham referred to the hostility involved in all depression, and in the case of grief, interpreted the response as a result of the bereaved person's seeking to maintain the lost love object by introjection. However, to the degree that introjection is successful and to the degree that there is hostility, it is clear that the unconscious hostility toward the object is experienced as hostility toward one's self.³⁹

The deeper the depressive reaction is in bereavement, the more one would suspect a strong ambivalent conflict and a high degree of guilt.⁴⁰ The behavioral responses of depression are attempts to cope with the separation anxiety

³⁷Coleman, op. cit., pp. 334, 336-37.

³⁸Ibid., p. 336.

³⁹Karl Abraham, Selected Papers of Karl Abraham (New York: Basic Books, 1953), p. 435.

⁴⁰Helene Deutsch, "Absence of Grief," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, VI (1937), 13.

cued off by the loss of a cathected object.

It should be emphasized that the depressive response is not in direct proportion simply to the amount of hostility felt, but to the intensity of the conflict of ambivalent feelings: the degree of hostility set over against the degree to which one has learned that hostility is a threat to relationship, that it threatens separation from one who is also loved and needed.

A clear illustration of the relationship of the dynamics of hostility and guilt as they relate to grief was presented by a female college student who, after a suicide attempt, was referred to this writer. She was so deeply depressed that at first communication was quite difficult. Gradually a picture was pieced together. The first part of it was the information that her father had died about a year and a half before and that there had been a suicide attempt on her part within a few months after that. In discussing the father's death, the information was divulged that her father and mother were divorced. The father had remarried, but the student had lived with her mother who had not remarried. She frequently visited her father and kept a close relationship with him. During one long, intensely emotional silence, in response to the question, "What are you feeling now?", the student replied, "I want to destroy something." What did she want to destroy? First, herself; then, anything; finally, her mother.

She had developed an unusually strong attachment to her father. When her parents were divorced when she was about eight, she held her mother responsible for it, and had tremendous hostility toward her which could be only partially expressed because of her dependence on the mother. When the father died this whole psychic conflict was reactivated, with the new force of several years of repressed hostility. There even seemed to be the unconscious accusation that the mother was responsible for the father's death.

In a sense she had mourned for her father, yet the mourning was also incomplete in that she had not worked out the unusually close feelings to him and the hostility toward the mother, whom she needed, loved, and hated. For these feelings of hatred she felt guilty (feared separation from her), and these were an intensifying and complicating factor in the grief, in that they were not openly expressed in some satisfactory fashion, but were turned inward upon the self.

Even though this situation differed from many of those discussed, since the basic hostility was not toward the deceased, it does show the relation of hostility and guilt as additive to the anxiety of grief, and how it expresses itself in bereavement as depression.

Self-punishing behavior. Hostility-guilt-anxiety also expresses itself and can be observed in grief in the self-punishing behavior of the bereaved. Much of this is related to depression: mental suffering, self-blame, the refusal to eat, the rejection of the help of others, withdrawal from society. Guilt-anxiety by its nature, its development within the context of the punishing-threatening behavior of the parents, asks for punishment. Punishment has early been learned to be sought when there was behavior by the child which threatened separation, because punishment itself was rewarding. It brought the physical presence of the parent and the restoration of the relationship. Therefore, when guilt anxiety is experienced in grief, it is not difficult to understand that varying degrees of self-punishing behavior should be sought. One form of this is depression, aggression turned inward.

All self-punishing elements are not to be subsumed under depressive reaction, however. Excessive activity which punishes one's body is one form. It has even been suggested that somatic illnesses following grief may play this role. Stern has found that illness not infrequently follows bereavement, especially among older people, who make fewer overt expressions of guilt than those younger. The question is raised whether the self-punishment of the illness might be a substitute act for the otherwise unex-

pressed guilt.⁴¹

Self-justifying behavior. A final clue to the possible operation of guilt-anxiety as a dynamic force in a grief reaction is the observation of compensatory and self-justifying behavior. Where there is excessive display of emotions or exaggerated idealization of the deceased or the relationship with the deceased or if the mourning behavior continues over a much longer period of time than usual, then an intense ambivalent conflict and the operation of guilt-anxiety might be suspected.

Fulcomer entitles one of the observed categories of behavior in the transitional stage of mourning as "Attention-Getting." Under this title are listed an emphasis on overt mourning, the desire to tell one's troubles over and over again to any listener, frequent weeping, rejecting and resenting help from others, and the overemphasizing of affectional attachments.⁴² Although any one or more of these items of behavior may frequently enter into the behavior of bereavement at least to some degree, all of them to a great degree are excessive, and one might suspect that hostility-guilt-anxiety is greater than usual.

A funeral of a woman who had been ill for about five years prior to her death was conducted by this writer.

⁴¹Stern, op. cit., p. 292.

⁴²Fulcomer, op. cit., p. 135.

During the last two years she had had two major, extensive surgeries, and had been almost completely confined to wheel chair and bed the last twelve months. There had been time and opportunity for some preliminary mourning by the husband to take place, especially since the wife had been quite willing to discuss her impending death and plans for the funeral and even the life of the family after her death.

At the pre-funeral call the husband was found to be not far from collapse and there were frequent periods of deep weeping. However, when he did talk, he went into great detail concerning the deceased's perfection as a wife and mother, what large amounts of money he had spent for medical care, that the best doctors of the state had been on her case, how he had spared no time or expense. There was continual seeking for support of the fact that he had done everything he could. Although the burial was in a very modest rural cemetery, an extremely lavish and costly vault and casket combination and headstone were used. About six weeks later, the husband had secured the services of a computer-operated matrimonial bureau; a few weeks later he was dating; and six months after the funeral he was married again.

Aspects of mourning before the fact had taken place. But as the wife lived on this mourning process not only reached the point of diminishing returns, it was reversed, as feelings of hostility began to be felt by the husband

toward the wife who did not die when she was supposed to, and who lived on to disrupt the family situation. This hostility and the intense guilt felt over it were the motivating forces behind the excessive nature of the expressions of grief, the self-justifying and compensatory behavior. However, the debt was paid by this behavior, and the husband was quickly freed, because of the period of breaking the emotional ties prior to the death.

IV. SUMMARY

This chapter has brought together a number of relevant ideas concerning guilt as a form of the anxiety of grief. These concepts have all been expressed before, but never clearly linked in this exact way in this context.

Grief involves separation anxiety as its major dynamic element. Guilt, too, has been considered to be a form of anxiety. When its form is carefully examined in respect to its dynamic origins in relationship to mother-father, it, too, is seen to be separation anxiety, the perception of a threat to the self arising from separation from a significant other. The approval-disapproval of meaningful others has been introjected as a vital part of one's own self. Guilt, when it is spoken of in relation to grief, is not a separate and distinguishable affect, but is part and parcel of the anxiety of grief.

The second major consideration is that the anxiety

which is called guilt is always present in grief and it is only a matter of the degree to which it operates to increase the intensity of the reaction. Ambivalent feelings are always involved in significant relationships. This is both the primitive learned response to relationship and the actual fact within every relationship. Hostile, aggressive feelings inevitably arise out of the mother's inability to meet every need on the part of the infant as soon as it appears. The infant's frustration cues aggression. But aggression is met with disapproval and the fear of the loss of the other is learned to be connected with these feelings. In this context, the anxiety is called guilt, and it is the result of feeling and expressions of hostility. In later relationships, needs are not totally met either. There is frustration, aggression, feelings of guilt, fear of loss of the other.

Guilt-anxiety operates in the grief situation through the mechanism of regression, which allows for a reexpression of early ambivalent feelings and their corresponding guilt-anxiety, through the unconscious feeling that the hostile wishes directed against the deceased have caused his death and that one is responsible for the separation, through genuine violations of the other as a person which tend to destroy relationship, and through the introjected fear of society as a result of not fulfilling social expectation in the role of the bereaved.

This guilt-anxiety expresses itself and can be observed in grief first as a conscious and articulated subjective experience; second as hostility toward others and hostility turned inward and experienced and observed as depression, and finally in self-justifying and compensatory behavior.

CHAPTER IX

EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY IN GRIEF

The fact that people fear their own death is not a new commentary on human life. Yet the verbal formulations of this idea and its relationship to the lives of persons vary drastically. In the midst of a culture which on the whole seeks to avoid the personal issue of death, an emphasis on the role in one's motivational life of the fear of death comes from two main sources: psychoanalysis and existentialism. Although these two approaches are couched in different terms, they reinforce one another concerning the reality of anxiety concerning one's own death.

This chapter will seek to present the emphasis of existentialism in regard to the dynamic force in human life of the idea of one's finitude, the source of existential anxiety. It will be seen that investigators in other fields have also noticed the prevalence of fear of death and man's need for meaning, and that a number of them feel that the death of a person with whom an individual has been closely involved emotionally acts as a strong stimulus to arouse one's own fears concerning the fact that he, too, will die. This anxiety is an element in the grief reaction. However, the position will be argued that what has been called existential anxiety has in its dynamic origins the same separation anxiety that has already been

elaborated in this present work as a universal human experience and which is the dominant affect in grief.

I. EXISTENTIALISTIC PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIANs

Søren Kierkegaard

The groundwork for contemporary existentialism was laid by Søren Kierkegaard. An excellent summary of his position in regard to anxiety has been presented by May.¹ The starting point is the givenness of the individual's existence, the nothingness which is defined in terms of possibility, radical freedom out of which comes anxiety-guilt-sin. The nothingness in man is the lack which leads to free choice, free act. The awareness of possibility and total responsibility produces dread (Angst, anxiety). This dread is similar to fear, but is different from it in that fear has reference to a specific object, whereas dread does not.

Kierkegaard has used the Biblical myth of Adam to describe the dynamics of anxiety-guilt and its origin. It was God's prohibition which awakened "in him the possibility of freedom,...the alarming possibility of being able."² But Adam (everyman) does not know specifically what he is

¹Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), pp. 27-45.

²Søren Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 40.

able to do or become. This is the source of ambivalent feelings toward the unknown object of his dread: he loves it, is attracted toward it, yet he fears it and flees from it. The subjective experience is that of guilt, the loving of that which one fears.³

Dread is the dizziness of freedom, (when) freedom... gazes down into its own possibility, grasping at finiteness to sustain itself. In this dizziness, freedom succumbs.⁴

The source of anxiety, then, is in reality within one's self, not in any given external situation. There is no real external object to be feared; there is rather nothing, no-thing. However, there is always the tendency for anxiety to seek an object, some thing rather than no-thing, for in this way the painful feelings may be more readily controlled. "The nothing which is the object of dread becomes...more and more a something."⁵ The answer to anxiety, though, is not to be found in evasion, or in any thing, but in acknowledgement of the anxiety for what it is, acceptance of it as a part of one's self, and allowing it to carry one to faith.⁶

Martin Heidegger

All twentieth century existentialist writers are greatly dependent upon Kierkegaard's basic concepts and

³Ibid., p. 39. ⁴Ibid., p. 55.

⁵Ibid., p. 55. ⁶Ibid., pp. 142-45.

emphases, however differently they may develop their thought. One of the more influential of these is Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger's fundamental presupposition in his analysis of being is the priority of the questions which each individual being asks about his own being. The question is not primarily about "being-in-general," but about the personal existing being.⁷ The only way any person can begin to think of being is through his own being, his own living of the life that is now his. To be existing also means to have possibility, potentiality to be fully oneself.⁸ This being who exists, the person, is in his existence one who fears. That about which he fears is his own existence. The fear is fear for one's self. "Only an entity for which in its being this very Being is an issue, can be afraid. Fearing discloses this entity as endangered and abandoned to itself."⁹

Even if the fear seems to be for something or someone else, the essential nature of fear as being for one's self is not changed, for a part of "Being-in-the-world" is to be a "Being-alongside." Therefore, fundamentally, "Dasein is in terms of what it is concerned with.

⁷Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 33.

⁸Ibid., p. 183. ⁹Ibid., p. 180.

When this is endangered, Being-alongside is threatened."¹⁰ That which one identifies his own being with is a part of his existence, and when this other is threatened, he himself is threatened, and the response is fear for one's own being. Heidegger makes this explicit when he discusses "fearing for the Other" as "being-afraid-for-oneself," for "what one 'is apprehensive about' is one's Being-with the Other, who might be torn away."¹¹

Since Dasein is "thrown-into-the-World" and left alone with freedom and the potentiality for Being, he may exercise this freedom in the direction either of authentic or inauthentic existence. The former is "the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way," as contrasted with the "they-self" (das Man-selbst), the person who is directed so by others that he never realizes his own uniqueness and potential.¹² To choose the latter route is the "fleeing of Dasein in the face of itself," giving up the possibility of authenticity, and is related to the topic of anxiety.¹³ Anxiety is not the fear of entities in the world; rather anxiety makes one turn to things in the world and absorb oneself in them. One is anxious simply concerning his own "Being-in-the-world" as such.¹⁴ There is no definite

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 180-81. ¹¹Ibid., p. 181.

¹²Ibid., p. 167. ¹³Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 230.

object which is the source of the anxiety, and therefore is located nowhere. One cannot perceive or locate the source. To exist is to have anxiety. Yet things in the world do not offer relief from it, and so anxiety pushes a person to the realization that he cannot understand himself in terms of the world. Therefore, it throws him "back upon that which he is anxious about—(his) authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world."¹⁵ This is the way in which anxiety reveals Dasein as "Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself," responsible for its own authenticity.¹⁶

Integrally related to the concept of anxiety as a given of Being-in-the-world is the awareness of death as a limitation of Being, and thus that which is given as a part of Being which is a threat to Being and in the face of which Dasein reacts with anxiety. The meaning of dying is to be "no-longer-in-the-world"; "no-longer-Dasein." This cannot be fully encountered in one's own death, but can be viewed in the death of another. Yet there is a phenomenal element of content missing, since what is left is merely a material Thing. But neither does this statement fully describe the psychological situation.

In one literal sense, the dead person is no longer present. But in another sense, and one just as phenomeno-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 232. ¹⁶Ibid.

logically real, there is a Being-with the deceased just as a person can always be-with another. But those left behind still cannot experience with the deceased his "Being-come-to-an-end." They are only "there-alongside"; the dying of the Other is not experienced.¹⁷ In other words, the meaning of having died to the one who dies is a question which cannot be answered. A person can only analyze his own Being-toward the death of another.

To summarize the discussion of death to this point: "there belongs to Dasein, as long as it is, a 'not-yet' which it will be...;" this coming to an end of that which still is, is of the nature of "no-longer-Dasein"; and this "coming-to-an-end implies a mode of Being in which the particular Dasein simply cannot be represented by someone else."¹⁸

If, then, an essential part of Dasein is in reality "not-yet," then Dasein must become, or even be, what is not yet. The moving toward what is not yet is a characteristic of Being. In this sense, "Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is."¹⁹

Within this conceptual scheme, the term dying does not refer to that one event at which time life physiologically ends, but for the whole way of Being of Dasein, and

¹⁷Ibid., p. 282. ¹⁸Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 289.

to analyze dying is a way of understanding life itself.²⁰ It is a necessary task, then, to interpret "death as Being-towards the end."²¹ Being must be oriented toward its possibility, its not-yet. Death stands before all persons, therefore life must be lived in the knowledge that death is not to be escaped. It is not something that Dasein obtains; rather, "if Dasein exists, it has already been thrown into this possibility."²² Yet in its Being as a given, Dasein does not have clear and experiential knowledge that death is a part of its Being. This thrownness presents itself to Dasein primarily in that state of mind which has been termed anxiety. Anxiety is always anxiety in the face of death, for this is an inescapable part of Being-in-the-world. That which is feared is one's own potentiality-for-Being. This anxiety in the face of death is not the same response as fear of one's demise, "but, as a basic state-of-mind of Dasein, it amounts to the disclosedness of the fact that Dasein exists as a thrown Being toward its end."²³

Usually as a person lives, he flees from, covers up, this aspect of his Being. This means that one's behavioral responses which result from such fleeing and covering up are the overt symptoms of an inauthentic existence. One

²⁰Ibid., p. 291. ²¹Ibid., p. 293.

²²Ibid., p. 295. ²³Ibid.

way in which this is exhibited is by the acceptance of a public interpretation of death which depersonalizes it, which sees it as an event apart from one's own Being. It is not yet present "for me" and is not a threat. This view robs one of the opportunity for having courage to experience anxiety in the face of death. Even before a person's coming into being, society has determined his state of mind toward death. The anxiety of facing one's own whole Being has been transformed into an ambiguous fear concerning a coming event. One can usually evade this fear, so the total result is the alienation of a person from his own potentiality-for-being. Rather than being removed as an everyday issue, however, the not-yet of one's Being is constantly a motivating force.²⁴

The intellectual certainty which all people have about their own death is not normally emotionally integrated into a mode of living. It is not an authentic certainty. It is not a doubting of the fact, but is an inappropriate manner of holding truth in one's Being, primarily because one defers the matter to a later time and an impersonal mode. That which is overlooked is the personalness of death and its possibility for the individual at any moment. Overlooking this, the character of death is veiled. The existential conception of death is that it is always a part

²⁴Ibid., pp. 295-99.

of the Being of a person who is by virtue of his being moving toward his end. But Dasein does not inevitably have to evade this not-yet which is a part of his Being. He can understand his own possibility in an authentic manner.²⁵

First, the actuality of one's death must be expected by him. But its actuality would rob Dasein of its Being-in-the-world. Thus a person is set free in his anticipation and can understand himself in his own potentiality-for-Being. This is done primarily by being torn away from bondage to social conformity. It forces Dasein alone to assume responsibility for himself, since he understands that death is not a general category but that it lays its claim upon an individual, himself. Anticipation does not allow a person to feel that death can be avoided, thereby freeing him to choose those possibilities for his life which would be eliminated if he were bound to evasive tactics. He is free to accept his whole Being and all of his possibilities. The certainty of death is not computed by the number of cases of death encountered, but by opening oneself to the constant threat which is given in Being.²⁶

"But the state-of-mind which can hold upon the utter and constant threat to itself arising from Dasein's ownmost

²⁵Ibid., pp. 299-304. ²⁶Ibid., p. 304-10.

individualized Being, is anxiety."²⁷ Here Dasein faces the "nothing" of his own possible non-existence. A person is anxious about his "potentiality-for-Being," which includes his death. Therefore, "Being-toward-death is essentially anxiety."²⁸

Heidegger makes a summary statement of authentic Being-towards-death:

anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the "they," and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.²⁹

Paul Tillich

Tillich roots his analysis of anxiety in his concept of man as finite freedom. Man is the animal who can ask the ontological question, "Why is there being? Why is there not rather nothing?" He can look beyond the limits of his own being, but in so doing is forced to the recognition of his limits. He is forced to consider the question of nonbeing, his own being nothing. The very structure which makes negative judgment possible demonstrates that nonbeing, negation, is a part of the structure of being itself.³⁰

²⁷Ibid., p. 310. ²⁸Ibid. ²⁹Ibid., p. 311.

³⁰Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 186-87.

The concrete form of nonbeing which makes this type of expression personally powerful for a person is death.

The anticipation of nothingness at death gives human existence its existential character. Sartre includes in nonbeing not only the threat of nothingness but also the threat of meaninglessness (i.e., the destruction of the structure of being).³¹

For man the real problem of nonbeing is the problem of finitude. Finitude is being limited by nonbeing, the "not yet" and "no more" of being. To be, therefore, is to be finite.³² But this does not fully define man. He belongs to more than finitude, because he has the power of infinite self-transcendence, "an expression of (his) belonging to that which is beyond nonbeing, to being-itself."³³ It is out of man's understanding of himself in this way that anxiety arises.

Finitude in awareness is anxiety....It cannot be derived; it can only be seen and described....Anxiety is independent of any special object which might produce it; it is dependent only on the threat of nonbeing.... In this sense it has been rightly said that the object of anxiety is nothingness....³⁴

It is not clear to this reader of Tillich just exactly what he means when he says that anxiety "cannot be derived" or that "anxiety is ontological; fear psychological."³⁵ To the extent that the latter statement means that fear is a response which is derived from a prior con-

³¹Ibid., p. 189. ³²Ibid., pp. 189-90.

³³Ibid., p. 191. ³⁴Ibid. ³⁵Ibid.

dition of anxiety, this condition being a universal human one, it can be understood and affirmed. But this work has already sought to show how anxiety itself is derived from a prior condition of being in the infant, and that therefore it, too, is "psychological," while still recognizing the universality of its development.³⁶

As indicated above, the most obvious concrete threat to one's self-affirmation is death. When a person becomes aware of nonbeing within himself through the anticipation of his own death, the anxiety which may have been latent is aroused and subjectively experienced. "This anxiety is potentially present in every moment. It permeates the whole of man's being...."³⁷ Yet day by day anxiety is not experienced as conscious fear of death. Rather, the characteristic human form of ontological anxiety is anxiety about meaninglessness. If man might not be, then why is he? And why should he continue to be? What meaning is there in his life?³⁸

Tillich confirms these views in more detail in another place. The anxiety which arises out of finite freedom can be distinguished in three ways, each of which is a way in which nonbeing threatens being.

³⁶See pp. 188-98.

³⁷Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 193.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 196, 210.

First, "nonbeing threatens man's ontic self-affirmation, relatively in terms of fate, absolutely in terms of death."³⁹ This is most basic and absolutely inescapable: "existentially everybody is aware of the complete loss of self which biological extinction implies."⁴⁰ The anxiety of death is the shadow which lies over all other anxieties and gives them their force; it reinforces the contingency of our being.⁴¹

Second, nonbeing "threatens man's spiritual self-affirmation, relatively in terms of emptiness, absolutely in terms of meaninglessness."⁴² Meaninglessness refers to the loss of an ultimate concern, a central organizing meaning for all of the other possible meanings of human life. Emptiness is produced when circumstances cut one off from creative participation in that which he had previously affirmed. Other things are tried and they do not satisfy. Emptiness and meaninglessness are actualized in man's estrangement, his sense of isolation of himself from that which he feels he should be united, that which is beyond himself. Man's very being involves his relations to meaning. "He is human only by understanding and shaping reality, both his world and himself, according to meanings and

³⁹Tillich, The Courage to Be, p. 41.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 42. ⁴¹Ibid., pp. 43-45.

⁴²Ibid., p. 41.

and values."⁴³ To lose meaning is to lose one's self, to be empty.

The third way in which nonbeing threatens man's self-affirmation is in the area of the moral, through the anxiety of guilt and condemnation. This has already been discussed in the preceeding chapter.⁴⁴

Critique

The existentialistic writers have performed the service of portraying openly and honestly the dynamic forces at work in the existing individual as a result of their very perceptive analysis of the human being. They have laid bare schemes of self-deception and evasive behavior and labelled them what they are. They have moved to the forefront man's experience of freedom and its awesome responsibility. They have pushed behind stated motivation to the universal anxiety which pervades human existence and have seen its power to move a person into a certain style of life. They have forced the reader to acknowledge the reality of his own death, the reality and basic nature of his anxiety about it, the utterly shaking power of this anxiety to disrupt one's life, and have lifted up inauthentic styles of life as being forms of living death, or forms of death within life. They have shown how man

⁴³Ibid., p. 50. ⁴⁴See p. 227.

stands alone in the moment of his decision about the present meaning of his life in the face of his ultimate death, and how his full life, his authentic existence, depends upon this lonely decision.

Their failure seems to lie not so much in their inaccuracies in the description of the life of the maturing person, beginning, say, with puberty, but in their failure to account developmentally for anxiety and the forms of behavior which come into being as a method of coping with the intolerable pain of this affect. Actually, their description of what is termed ontological or existential anxiety and the concepts connected with it is upheld by the observations of those in the field of the behavioral sciences.

II. CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE FROM PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Anxiety and the Loss of Meaning

Viktor Frankl. Frankl places the necessity for meaning at the heart of man's life; the search for it "is the primary motivational force in man."⁴⁵ He traces the arousal of anxiety of an unmanageable degree to the failure of a person to find meaning in life and to assume responsibility

⁴⁵Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 99.

for his existence. Back of every neurotic anxiety lies existential anxiety.⁴⁶ Existential anxiety is the "fear of death and simultaneously fear of life as a whole...."⁴⁷ A person seems to have this fear of life when he has lost his central value or values, and the loss of value is experienced as the meaninglessness of life. As a result of the failure to find meaning, to create value for oneself, the person feels guilty toward life and there is anxiety toward life and death.⁴⁸ "As soon as life's fullness of meaning is rediscovered, the neurotic anxiety (to the extent that it is existential anxiety) no longer has anything to fasten on."⁴⁹

The question of the meaning of life is not to be answered in general terms but rather in terms of the specific meaning for a particular person at a given time.⁵⁰

Erich Fromm. Fromm agrees concerning the need for meaning, and this is precisely man's central problem. The perpetuation of his primary ties block his full human development, his reason, his widening and deepening

⁴⁶Viktor Frankl. The Doctor and the Soul (New York: Knopf, 1955), p. 209.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 210. ⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 209, 213.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 214.

⁵⁰Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, p. 110.

relationships, his self-determining capacities. Yet within these primary ties is security. Here a person has a structured place. He is relatively safe. With the breaking of the primary ties and movement toward individualization as a person, there is a growing sense of isolation, insecurity, doubt concerning one's place in the universe and the meaning of one's life.⁵¹ To put it another way, there is increasing anxiety as a result of separation and the loss of meaning. His basic need is "to find an answer to the question of the meaning of his existence and to discover norms according to which he ought to live."⁵² It should not be thought that meaning implies certainty. There is no given certainty to life. Yet meaning can be created by man as he allows his own powers to be expressed in productive living, in relatedness and love.⁵³ Broken away from primary ties, but without relatedness and love, a person feels alone and powerless, thus threatened, anxious. This is the condition of every person.⁵⁴ As a person seeks to find security, escapes from anxiety, in various values and meanings, it is clear that everything which threatens these

⁵¹Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Rinehart, 1941), pp. 35-36.

⁵²Erich Fromm, Man for Himself (New York: Rinehart, 1947), p. 7.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 45, 96.

⁵⁴Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 29.

central, vital interests threatens the whole person and is experienced as anxiety.⁵⁵ There are a number of avenues of escape from the individual freedom which produces anxiety, but a number of them are the types of evasion and denial and escape which Heidegger would term inauthentic: authoritarianism, destructiveness, automaton conformity.⁵⁶ The anxiety of one's free existence is effectively met by a person's relating

himself spontaneously to the world, in love and work, in the genuine expression of his...capacities; he can thus become one again with man, nature, and himself, without giving up the independence and integrity of his individual self.⁵⁷

Henry Lindgren. Lindgren, the psychologist, links awareness of death and lack of meaning as the root of anxiety. On the one hand he states that basic anxiety is an "unconscious awareness" that we are alive only temporarily which is always lying behind all conscious awareness. There is a constant inner tension growing out of the "fear that some day we shall cease to be the persons we are."⁵⁸ Again he says: "somewhere out in the future lurks death—

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 181. ⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 141-206.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 140.

⁵⁸Henry C. Lindgren, Meaning: Antidote to Anxiety (New York: Nelson & Sons, 1956), p. 16.

the end of ourselves as we know ourselves."⁵⁹

The basis of this fear is in the human character of a person. Because he is a self, things tend to be interpreted in the light of "self-reference." "All anxiety-provoking situations raise this question, 'What is going to happen to me?'"⁶⁰

This forms the link between the threat of death and the lack of meaning as productive of anxiety. One of the characteristics of being a self is the constant organizing of experiences into a mental picture of one's self, a self-concept. This is the framework out of which our own behavior and that of others toward us and new experiences are interpreted. Behavior and experiences which do not tend to substantiate the self-concept tend to be responded to as threatening. This is simply to say, if they do not make sense, have meaning to the person, within the framework of his self-concept, they are anxiety producing.⁶¹ Therefore, "anxiety is caused by an absence of meaning— by meaninglessness, by situations that do not make sense to us.... The antidote to anxiety is meaning."⁶²

This review of Frankl, Fromm, and Lindgren has sought to demonstrate that sensitive observers in the fields of psychology and psychotherapy have produced evidence

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 60. ⁶⁰Ibid. ⁶¹Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁶²Ibid., p. 34.

which supports the statements of existentialistic philosophers and theologians concerning the relationship between loss of meaning and anxiety, and that the concept of one's own death was related to loss of meaning. Now it will further be shown that psychotherapists and others also have been concerned about the role of the fear of one's own death in the total anxiety picture of the individual.

Anxiety and the Fear of Death

Psychoanalytic interpretations. Freud had recognized the reality of the fear of death, but did not treat it at length. For him it was not instinctive, but was related first to the infant's feeling of helplessness in the face of intense instinctual drives at the absence of the mother, and second at the later separation anxiety of castration fear. The situations are analogous.⁶³ The fear of death is a result of the final transformation of this same separation fear, the fear of the super-ego, when the latter is projected outward onto the powers of destiny.⁶⁴

The fear of death, Freud felt, was immediately met with the defense mechanism of denial and became the source of the idea of immortality.⁶⁵ Therefore, he felt, no one really believes in his own death. Actually Freud was not

⁶³Freud, op. cit., XX, 130. ⁶⁴Ibid., XX, 140.

⁶⁵Ibid., XIV, 294-95.

far from Heidegger's view about how readily man is able to depersonalize the reality of his own death.

Others assign a more significant motivational role to the fear of death and see it as a greater component of anxiety in general. Chadwich emphasizes the irrational and all-pervasive nature of death anxiety, pointing out that it is found clinically in those where "there is no immediate or known menace to life."⁶⁶ She agrees with Freud concerning the relation of death anxiety to separation from the mother and to the later symbol of separation, namely castration, for the female simply stated as loss of love. However, in interpreting castration in its proper sense as fear of punishment, she raises the question of whether castration itself is not derivative of fear of death, rather than vice versa, with the earlier threat of punishment being experienced as that of death, and castration now being the lessening of the death penalty.⁶⁷ The original source of anxiety is the infant's perception of his helplessness, the feeling of threat to the ego, and the understanding of death as "the power over which we have no control."⁶⁸

It is this idea of the extinction of the ego, which is the most intolerable factor in the conception of the fear of death. The greatest difficulty presented to the mind is to realize a negative condition, a state

⁶⁶Mary Chadwick, "Notes upon the Fear of Death," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, X (1929), 322.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 329-30. ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 323.

of non-existence of the self or the non-continuance of existence in relation to the outside world....⁶⁹

Wahl also emphasizes the universality of the development of death anxiety, man's feeling of powerlessness to cope with it, and the lengths to which people go to deny and distort it, how they flee from its reality.⁷⁰ The most forceful example of such evasion and flight is the paucity of psychiatric investigation of the subject.

Psychiatry, by the very nature of its field, has always been concerned with the investigation and elucidation of those aspects of human character and symptom formation which the average man is prone to shun. And yet it is a surprising and significant fact that the phenomenon of the fear of death, or specific anxiety about it (thanatophobia), while certainly no clinical rarity, has almost no description in the psychiatric or psychoanalytic literature.⁷¹

Wahl speaks first of the infant's learned sense of omnipotence, the sense of adequacy which is borrowed from the parents through his identification with them. But there is a learned opposing force, namely that evil desires are the responsibility of the one having them. The process of socialization always has its painful and frustrating experiences for the child, so he always has hostile death wishes toward the socializer. When the child then first learns of the reality and meaning of death he is frightened

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 329-30.

⁷⁰C. W. Wahl, "The Fear of Death," Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, XXII (1958), 214-15.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 215.

by his death wishes toward the significant others. This leads him to fear concerning his own death, for to think a thing is the same to the unconscious as doing the act, and to do something is to be open to retribution by the same act. Thus, to wish the death of another is to invite the punishment of death.⁷² "Therefore, none escapes the fear of personal death in either direct or symbolic form."⁷³

The linking of death anxiety and fear of punishment finds corroborative evidence in the investigation by Greenberger of the fantasies of female cancer patients. In an analysis of Thematic Apperception Test responses it was discovered that an increase of punishment themes (punishment, guilt, aggression, impairment, competition with mother) significantly differentiated the experimental group from a control group of women with only minor disorders. Similar results were obtained by matching the control group with a group with a variety of severe ailments. Greenberger's conclusions are that the child's conception of death as punishment for wrongdoing (including wrong-wishing also, undoubtedly) lives on and becomes an intensifying factor in the anxiety of women who are confronting death.⁷⁴

⁷²Ibid., pp. 218-20. ⁷³Ibid., p. 220.

⁷⁴Ellen Greenberger, "Fantasies of Women Confronting Death," Journal of Consulting Psychology, XXIX (1965), 255-60.

Zilboorg verifies the universality of death anxiety in a very explicit statement: "no one is free of the fear of death."⁷⁵ It is the basic fear which lies behind every feeling of anxiety and fear in any situation of danger.⁷⁶ Fear of death is the affective aspect of the effort of the organism to preserve itself in the face of dangers that threaten life. Zilboorg's thesis is that of necessity this fear must be repressed in order to allow the person to live comfortably and function properly. He recognizes that under repression it still operates unconsciously and must be allowed some outlet.⁷⁷ At this point Zilboorg differs from the existentialist writers who have spoken of the necessity of the anticipation of death, the courage to accept this limitation as a part of oneself. He expresses what he feels to be the proper attitude:

We must maintain within us the conviction that we are stronger than all those deathly dangers, and also that we, each of us who speaks of himself in the first person singular, are exceptions whom death will not strike at all.⁷⁸

He does not mean, of course, that a person can come to the place where he can deny death intellectually, but he feels that an effective repression of the affect can so

⁷⁵Gregory Zilboorg, "Fear of Death," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XII (1943), 466.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 465. ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 466.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 468.

separate the verbal admission of one's own death from the affect that "he does not really care. He is having a good time with living, and he does not think about death and does not care to bother about it...."⁷⁹

Wahl agrees with the existentialist writers, though, when he states that it is possible for a person, without total repression of the affect, to see death as a completion of a pattern, spend one's life without fear, live creatively and productively and with satisfying relationships, "to integrate and accept the thought that his self will one day cease to be."⁸⁰ This is a possibility which is built on the foundation of a childhood where anxiety was induced only to a minimal level, where there was a strong, positive relationship of love and trust with adequate, non-anxious parents.

The child who is strongly dependent upon his significant adults for his security and his conception of himself as a worthy and adequate person is capable, if they meet these needs, of integrating the concept of 'not-being' if his parents can do so.⁸¹

Wahl seems to have built upon the conceptuality of Klein, who spoke of how the increase of love and trust and the production of happy experiences diminished to a minimum the separation anxieties of the infant. These experiences with the parents become incorporated as "good objects,"

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 470-71. ⁸⁰Wahl, op. cit., p. 323.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 322-23.

they serve immediately as the positive forces which allow the ego to face threatening experiences without acute fears of destruction, and they remain a part of the ego to serve the same purpose from that time on.⁸² These internalized "good" experiences become the resources which enable a person to face successfully the mourning-anxiety cued off by the death of a love object, when one's own inner world is perceived as in the process of disruption.⁸³

The person with incorporated "good objects" will be able, according to Wahl, to discuss openly the possibility of his own death and live creatively and freely with this possibility. Here, then, is presented by psychoanalysis the foundation for the "courage to be" in the face of one's nonbeing and the openness toward death that Tillich and Heidegger speak of.

Other analysts have also observed the universality and the motivating force of the fear of death.⁸⁴ It is at once clear that the psychoanalysts have some differences

⁸²Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic Depressive States," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXI (1940), 128.

⁸³Ibid., p. 135.

⁸⁴Bernard Brodsky, "The Self-Representation, Analogy, and the Fear of Dying," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, VII (1959), 105; Karem J. Monsour, "Asthma and the Fear of Death," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXIX (1960), 59-61; Ernst Simmel, "Self-Preservation and the Death Instinct," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XII (1944), 165, 167.

among themselves in the exact language which they use to refer to the origin and the intrapsychic dynamics of the fear of death and, to some degree, the way in which it should be handled. Nevertheless, these therapists are in general agreement concerning the reality of death anxiety, its universality, and its influence as a strong motivation in human life. It is also to be noticed that almost all of them have spoken of it in the same terms and in the context of the identical origin as simply separation anxiety. In spite of their own theoretical differences, it is still possible to accept their clinical observations of the fear of death as supportive evidence for the ideas presented in existential philosophy and theology concerning the universal operation in human life of anxiety, the central core of which is related to one's own death, the possibility at any moment of our own non-existence.

The experience of freedom. On the whole, the existentialists and the psychoanalysts differ from one another in the source of anxiety in freedom on the one hand or in a determined manner on the other. This is certainly not the place to revive the well-worn but still unresolved question of determinism versus freedom. It may well be that a major difficulty is still a semantic one. The important point is that they both point to the universality of anxiety, and they both speak of the death anxiety. If

it is inevitable, then the question of whether it is necessary becomes only a word game. One does not have to respond to his awful sense of freedom with anxiety; he merely always does. The parents do not have to be anxious in the presence of the infant and small child and be inadequate to meet all of his needs consistently; it merely follows that in the ongoing pattern of life this is the way they do behave.

A dual recognition has to be made. First, it is obvious that the infant comes into an interpersonal situation not of his own choosing and without the ability to select freely the stimuli he will give attention to. The rudiments of selfhood, as was seen in Chapter VI, are given to him by the behavior of his parents toward him. In this context there develops an interpersonal self, who cannot escape perceiving and responding to threats to himself in the form of separation from the significant others. There is anxiety prior to freedom.

On the other hand the developing human person begins to have experiences of choice and decision which he calls freedom. He is aware of responsibility concerning himself; he becomes conscious of his temporal finitude; he questions the meaning of his existence; he fears death, annihilation of himself. In this context, too, he experiences anxiety. Yet as was indicated, this second level of anxiety is built upon the first, and the intensity of it is dependent not so

much upon the reality of the threat but upon the prior level of anxiety, although different, more newly learned stimuli cue it off. And, as the therapists have noted, even the fear of death arises out of the infant's situation of interaction with others.

III. EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY IN THE GRIEF-ANXIETY REACTION

Relevant Observations from Earlier Literature

Anxiety defined and elaborated in existential terms has been observed as an integral part of the grief reaction by a number of writers. Interestingly, the academic psychologists have not made these observations. Waller, the sociologist, feels that it is important not to overlook the fact that the death of a person emotionally close to one is a reminder to the one left behind that he, too, must die, and that the bereaved person does appear to be acutely concerned about his own death.⁸⁵ Eliot, in the area of social psychology, has noted the reactions of the grief stricken as including a loss of meaning in much that had previously seemed important and that there was a sense of emptiness and futility.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Willard Waller and Reuben Hill, The Family: A Dynamic Interpretation (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), p.486.

⁸⁶Thomas D. Eliot, "Bereavement: Inevitable but Not Insurmountable," Family, Marriage, and Parenthood, Howard Becker and Reuben Hill, eds. (Boston: Heath, 1948), p. 653.

It is not unexpected that practitioners and writers in the field of pastoral care would be more prone to perceive a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness and the question of one's own death and to elaborate an interpretation of these factors in relation to anxiety with more frequency than others. Certainly to do so is more in keeping with a theological orientation than it is with the behavioristic-experimental approach of much of contemporary academic psychology.

Kean has observed as one aspect of the dynamics of grief "the reminder of one's own eventual death."⁸⁷ He has noticed that this response to the death of someone emotionally close is sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, but he states that the fear of death is an almost universal anxiety and that it raises the existential question, "Has life any meaning other than that which we as human beings put into it?"⁸⁸ If the answer to this question is in the negative, then death is threatening by seeming to annihilate everything that matters. This conclusion is warranted by the human experience which has been so clearly stated by the existentialists that when one reflects on the meaning of life he must also reflect on the reality of death and

⁸⁷Charles D. Kean, Christian Faith and Pastoral Care (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1961) p. 105.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 110.

its relation to the meaning of life. Benda, a psychiatrist writing specifically for ministers, sees "the reality of death as the symbol of our finitude" as an element of the grief reaction which calls for our acceptance.⁸⁹

Rogers, in viewing the needs of the bereaved, saw the value in reducing the intensity of the grief reaction of a sense of the unity of experience and the recognition of a purpose in life.⁹⁰ In other words, an increase of meaning produces a reduction of grief response. Or to reverse the statement, the lack of meaning would tend to increase grief. Rogers has made it clear, as this present work has sought to do in more detail, that relations with other persons and objects in the attempt to meet one's security needs produce the total context out of which a person operates as a person. These others are a significant part of the meaning of a person's life and these persons and their meanings for one become literally a part of one's own self.⁹¹ Thus, the loss of the other is interpreted as the loss of meaning which is the equivalent of the loss of one's self, which is, according to the thesis

⁸⁹Clemens E. Benda, "Bereavement and Grief Work," Journal of Pastoral Care, XVI (1962), 9.

⁹⁰William F. Rogers, "The Place of Grief Work in Mental Health" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, Boston, 1949), p. 87.

⁹¹William F. Rogers, "The Pastor's Work with Grief," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September, 1963), 19-20.

of this present work, anxiety.

Irion is another who stresses that the meaningfulness of life can be described in terms of interpersonal relationships.⁹² Therefore, whenever a relationship is broken, one's system of meaning normally does not remain undisturbed. The fear of death itself is also a dynamic force in the grief reaction. It is an "ontological" fear, one "which has its roots in the very nature of man's being as a finite creature."⁹³

Jackson states that one's response to the death of an emotionally related person cannot be completely understood "without taking into account the attitude of the bereaved toward his own eventual death."⁹⁴ The dynamics of one's understanding of his own finite nature are always involved. "The fear of our own death lurks relentlessly in the back of our minds, and facing the mystery of death always opens to us the gulf of the frightening unknown."⁹⁵ Man's ability to understand his finite nature and to conceptualize it is the same capacity which leads him to seek

⁹²Paul E. Irion, The Funeral and the Mourners (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 26.

⁹³Ibid., p. 48.

⁹⁴Edgar N. Jackson, Understanding Grief (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 35.

⁹⁵Edgar N. Jackson, For the Living (Des Moines: Channel Press, 1963), p. 23.

for meaning and coherence in life's experiences. Jackson observes the loss of meaning as a symptom of grief. He then shows the relation of this aspect of grief to the individual's total value structure and concludes that if one's sense of life's total meaning encompasses present relations with others but also goes beyond them, then the death of these persons is not seen as the end of all meaning nor is it interpreted as some ultimate threat to the person himself.⁹⁶

Death of a Significant Other as a Stimulus to Existential Anxiety

The dread of death is a universal human emotion. It is related to the necessary search for meaning in life. Fear of death and lack of meaning combine as central characteristics of what has been referred to as existential anxiety, present in all persons at all times. It cannot be removed. However, it can be evaded, and people do this in varying degrees by mechanisms of denial, repression, sublimation. Although what is called existential anxiety is a motivating force in human behavior to some degree at all times, only on occasion does it break out as overt anxiety. One of these occasions would seem to be when someone very closely related emotionally dies. Usually,

⁹⁶Jackson, Understanding Grief, pp. 114-21.

as Heidegger has so well said, society gives to the individual the thought forms and behavior patterns that he needs to depersonalize death and to separate oneself from it temporally. However, as Irion has perceived, evasion of this anxiety is made very difficult by the reality of the death of someone very close to a person, an event which tends to personalize death and stimulate the fear of his own.⁹⁷ It is personalized because the earlier process of emotional identification with the other means that the other lives as part of one's self, not completely separate from one, and his death cannot be seen in any way other than in terms of personal reference to one's own life.

Meissner's study of the responses of subjects to psychoanalytic death symbols should be recalled here. His hypothesis was built upon the concept of anxiety as being basically a fear of death. He noted that there was greater affectivity of response as measured by the galvanic skin response to those words which in psychoanalytic theory were symbolic of death than to those which did not have such symbolism.⁹⁸ If there is validity at all to his study at the point of there being a fear of death which can be

⁹⁷Irion, "In the Midst of Life...Death!" p. 48.

⁹⁸W. W. Meissner, "Affective Response to Psychoanalytic Death Symbols," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LVI (1958), 299.

stimulated by certain cues, it might well be assumed that the death of a person with whom one had identifications would be a more powerful cue than words with death symbolism. Zilboorg has specifically stated the force of the death of another in breaking through defenses erected against fear of death:

Not until (a person) begins to lose members of his family and friends...does he come to grips with the fear of death by way of identification with those who were killed.⁹⁹

Existential Responses to Death of the Other

Loss of meaning. It seems as if there would be three responses related to the arousal of existential anxiety which might be cued off by the death of an emotionally significant person. First there is the question of meaning. This other, in whom there has been an emotional investment, is dead. In the relationship there had been meaning. It had been felt that indeed there was meaning in the life of the person. Now that he is dead, the question about the significance of the other thrusts itself to the fore. "He was of value to me. Was there, is there, any other value? Did his life really have the meaning attributed to it by me? Or has his life been without meaning?" This inevitably raises the additional question of the present meaning of one's own existence. "In light

⁹⁹Zilboorg, op. cit., p. 471.

of the fact that I too shall die, is my life of permanent significance?"

Non-being. This leads to a second response. Man ponders the idea of what it must mean not to be. But he cannot think concretely about his own death under most circumstances. It is possible to observe the death of other, but not of our own, except as abstract thought. But when the other who dies carries with him to the death some of our own emotional investment, an extension of ourselves, this comes as close as possible to the experiencing of our own death. It brings into awareness the anxiety concerning death that is a part of every person through the affectively charged thoughts: "It could have been I. Why was it not I? Something in me is dead. I too will die. I will not be."

Responsibility. A third possible response is that of the anxiety of responsibility for one's own life until his death. The question is not just that of one's own future death, but the anxiety concerning how his own life can be sustained without the emotional support of the one who is now gone. Life has been lived in relationship. How can it be lived fully and with meaning in separation? "I am left alone to be fully responsible for my own life, which is empty."

Equivalence of Death Anxiety and Grief Symptoms

An illustration of the equivalence of symptoms between death anxiety and the grief reaction is afforded by a college girl who came to this writer for counseling. Her overt symptoms were those of acute anxiety attack; her subjective experience was that of intense fear, verbalized as fear of death. She was afraid that she was going to die. Except for the fact that no one whom she knew had died and that the total subjective experience was that of fear of death, the disorder ran a course which under other circumstances might have been called grief. There were feelings of loneliness, of being abandoned, depression and despair, periods of weeping, many times gasping, deep sighs, the swallowing of air, general shakiness, inability to eat or to sleep well, the expression of a feeling of emptiness and the loss of all meaning to life. She stated that there seemed to be no reason to live, although she usually moved on to say that she had not given up the hope that she could find a reason. After several weeks the symptoms gradually began to subside, although not disappear entirely. She began to eat and sleep better, have fewer and less severe feelings of depression and less weeping. After about ten weeks most of the symptoms had disappeared with the exception of occasional feelings of being alone, the question of the meaning of her life, and occasional thoughts about death. However, the thoughts, although somewhat disturbing

right at the moment, were no longer accompanied by a disruptive affect of fear. Her adjustive behavior in the several weeks following seemed to show that the death anxiety was actually being resolved rather than simply repressed. In addition to the counseling relationship and important insights, she was developing a very meaningful affectionate relationship with a male student. In all of this she was finding a meaning for herself and the ability to live with the thoughts of death without a paralyzing fear. If someone had been able to observe the subject closely without knowing any of the precipitating factors, he might well have judged the situation to be that of acute grief, with the gradual subsiding of grief symptoms with the passage of time and the attachments of new relationships and activities.

IV. EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY CONCEIVED OF AS A SEPARATION ANXIETY

Review of Relevant Concepts of Separation Anxiety

By way of a review of relevant ideas, reference should be made once more to the unavoidable learning of the anxiety reaction by every infant arising from the anticipated fear of pain during the absence of the one upon whom he is dependent and upon whom he learns that he is dependent. Thus, the first basic anxiety is connected with separation from a significant other.

It should further be repeated that the attitudes and behavior of the other, and later others, are introjected as the original dynamic foundations of one's self. The developing self is interpersonal in its nature, and the absence of the significant other is primarily experienced as self loss.

It is also to be remembered that meanings are learned in the context of these affective relationships, and the language which facilitates the learning and communication of meaning is also learned in affective relationships. Although meaning can be intellectually formulated, its origin and force is not only emotional, but emotional-relational. Meaning is given and received in relationships. The breaking of relationship is the loss of meaning. But the breaking of relationship is also perceived as self loss, threat to self, with the response of anxiety being given. Therefore, the breaking relationship involves a sense of loss of meaning, and is simultaneous with the subjective anxiety.

Relation of Self-Loss to Loss of Meaning

It remains to point back to the learning of the fear of death, which has been described as rising out of the affect of separation anxiety, and being the ultimate threat of self loss. There is a sense of loss of meaning within the experience of anxiety because there is the sense of loss of the self which can respond to meaning, which can

create and hold meaning. In separation there has been loss of a central value, actually one's own self, but in separation the loss of the extended self in the other. The symptom of feeling of emptiness has more than symbolic meaning; there is an affective self loss. Something (in terms of emotional dynamics, meaning) which was there is no longer there. The loss of one's own self, of which the introjected other is a literal living force, through separation from the other is what the fear of death and loss of meaning are all about. In grief it is the reproduction of an early learned anticipation of pain to the self, experienced at the present because the process of stimulus generalization has led the person to make the same response to any form of separation from others, separation having been the original stimulus. Not the precise form of the separation, but the intensity of the infantile roots of the fear seems to be the determining factor. Anxiety is the painfully experienced alarm of threat to the self, and this alarm may be sounded by relationships with one's spouse that reactivate an unresolved Oedipus complex or by the poignant pointing up of one's own mortality by the death of an emotionally related person. It is the same alarm, the same

anxiety.¹⁰⁰ Only the external stimulus, the contextual point of reference is different in its conscious form of perception and in its symbolic formulation.

The Unity of Anxiety Experiences

Paul Pruyser, too, has reached the conclusion that existential or ontological anxiety as a separate and distinct category of affect is a myth. He makes a distinction between the affect of anxiety and the cognitive state which he believes is the primary meaning of what writers refer to as existential anxiety.¹⁰¹ The latter he conceives of as a form of knowing concerning one's ontological status, his values, principles, ideals, and goals, his finitude. This type of definition, Pruyser feels, takes this supposed type of anxiety out of the psychological category.¹⁰² As long as there is merely an intellectual discussion of problems and questions of life and death, it is only a philosophical exercise concerning existence. To the degree that there is genuine anxiety, it is existential in the sense that it is an affective experience of the existing

¹⁰⁰Seward Hiltner, "Some Theories of Anxiety: Psychiatric," Constructive Aspects of Anxiety, Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger, eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 35.

¹⁰¹Paul Pruyser, "Anxiety: Affect or Cognitive State?" Constructive Aspects of Anxiety, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 132-35.

individual,

felt centrally, demonstrated psychosomatically, experienced unpleasantly, and reacted to holistically.... Thus experienced, there is no categorical difference between existential anxiety and any other anxiety.¹⁰³

The conclusion is in line with the thesis of this work. Nevertheless, it would seem that Pruyser has made too sharp a distinction between values, principles, ideals, goals, questions of the meaning of life, the awareness of one's death and the affective life. He has failed to express in his discussion the dynamic connection between the origin of separation anxiety and the interpersonal learning of meaning within the separation anxiety matrix and the learning of the fear of death and its relation both to separation and to meaning.

Hiltner agrees "that anxiety in the fundamental sense means one thing and not two or more...."¹⁰⁴ This is based on the primary function of anxiety to warn concerning threat to selfhood. It makes no difference functionally whether the danger has to do with the evasion of a real external danger to the physical life of the organism or whether it has to do with questions of meaning, purpose, finitude. "For (a person's) continuing existence, and his existence as a truly human being, the heeding of both

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰⁴Hiltner, "Epilogue," Constructive Aspects of Anxiety, op. cit., p. 154.

signals is necessary."¹⁰⁵ At the same time Hiltner makes very clear the concept which is being presented in this work concerning the priority of separation anxiety as being the source of affective experience, no matter what terms are used to describe the external circumstances or intellectual content of the experience, when he says, "I have never seen 'ontological anxiety' in pure concrete form."¹⁰⁶ But, not to overlook the integral relationship between meaning, sense of finitude, freedom and responsibility for oneself, he goes on, "and yet, on the other hand, I have never seen a disturbed mental patient without some trace of 'ontological anxiety.'"¹⁰⁷

V. SUMMARY

Certain philosophers and theologians have raised questions and problems concerning man's existence in forms compatible with man's own experience of these matters of the meaning and purpose of life, freedom, responsibility, death, anxiety. These are termed existential or ontological questions and experiences, given by virtue of the very existence of the experiencing individual. At the core of existential anxiety are the threats to the individual implied in loss of meaning, the experience of emptiness, the anxiety of the responsibility for himself implied in his

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 155. ¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 160. ¹⁰⁷Ibid.

freedom, the dread of recognition of his own finitude, the possibility of his own nonbeing, fear concerning his own dying. Evidence for the reality of the fear of death and its significance as a motivating force in personality is drawn from the observations of the psychoanalysts. At the same time, other therapists and some psychologists have pointed to the central characteristic of man as being his search for meaning. It is not finally possible to separate the search for meaning for one's life from the recognition of the fact that one day he will cease to be, and in both of these the affect of anxiety as a warning of threat to the ego is involved.

A possible conclusion is that what is termed existential anxiety cannot be thought of as a different category of anxiety, but that the existentialistic writers are merely employing a method of expressing the universality of anxiety in man, its motivating power to lead one into inauthentic existence through the use of limiting mechanisms of escape and denial, its relationship to man's subjective experiences of freedom and responsibility, his loss of and search for meaning and self-affirmation, the basic question of his existence as a person, his fear of death, the annihilation of his selfhood.

But the affect which might be felt in the midst of such human experiences as the existentialists describe is the same affect of all anxiety, the fear of the loss of

one's own self through the loss of or separation from a significant other, learned early in infancy and modified upward or downward in intensity depending upon the amount and quality of relationships of love and trust, or the lack of them, with the significant others in his life, and in the context of which he has learned his values and meanings and reason for being.

This is the very fear which is involved as the major aspect of the affective response of grief. It is separation anxiety in acute form cued off by the death of a person with whom one has been emotionally related. The issue of one's own death is raised since the death of an emotionally related person is perceived as the death of one's own self in two ways: the death of the extended self which had lived in the other and the death of that aspect of one's own self which was the introjected other. Thus, the person comes as close as possible within life to experiencing his own death. It is concrete, real, personal, close, frightening. This anxiety is a large element in the grief-anxiety reaction. It may be called existential anxiety for purposes of discussion because of the person's capacity to know himself as the one being threatened and his tendency to analyze his experiences and to grapple with the questions of meaning which are involved.

CHAPTER X

RELEVANCE OF THE THESIS TO PSYCHOLOGY AND PASTORAL CARE

I. A SUMMARY OF THE PURPOSE AND FINDINGS OF THIS INVESTIGATION

This study has sought to fill a gap in the psychological literature dealing with the reaction of grief by presenting a psychodynamic analysis. This gap is noticeable in two ways. First, considering the universality of the response of grief, the topic has received all too little investigation. Second, most of the material related to it has failed to give precise definition of it. These two facts have had an effect upon one another which has tended to reduce rather than increase research and investigation.

This study has attempted to break through this impasse by reviewing, evaluating, and criticizing, and wherever possible building upon available literature which has discussed grief. A number of observations should be made. First, academic psychology on the whole has completely ignored the human emotion of grief. The only exceptions are some very early works and a few articles from contemporary social psychology. Also, in relation to the family, some helpful material has come from sociology. Second, psycho-

analytic therapy, while tending to focus on the pathological aspects of grief, has at least recognized the reaction as a significant one and in a number of articles has emphasized the intrapsychic dynamics of the affect. A few non-psychoanalytic psychiatric studies and interpretations have been made. Third, the largest amount of material has come rather naturally out of and for that profession which more than any other is involved with individuals in their grief work, the ministers of religion. With the development of the field of pastoral care, observations have become more systematized and insights based upon a knowledge of personality dynamics have been given. Yet for the most part, with a few notable exceptions, the major purpose of the articles and books has been functional in the sense that they are designed to give comfort to the grief sufferer or guidance to the minister in counseling the bereaved and in conducting the funeral to meet the needs of the bereaved. An operational definition of grief which would lead to the statement of testable hypotheses and productive research has rarely been considered.

Where a definition of grief has been given or simply implied in the discussion, it is usually found to fall into one of two categories. First, grief is an emotion which a person experiences upon the death of a loved one (and to some degree at times of other significant personal loss) and which is distinguishable from other emotions. Or,

second, grief is merely a term used to apply to an interacting group of several identifiable emotions which have been stimulated by the death of a related person or by other major loss. This study rejects the former usage and has sought in detail to demonstrate that within the latter usage the most significant affective element is anxiety, identical in its dynamics with any acute anxiety attack, with the external cue being the death of a person with whom one has been in emotional relationship. This thesis was developed by reviewing Freud's changing concepts of anxiety, taking his valid insights and then continuing to follow to its conclusion the interpersonal direction toward which he is seen as pointing. A theory of the interpersonal nature of the self was presented to replace somatically based psychoanalysis as being a more appropriate theoretical model for the understanding and discussion of anxiety as separation fear. The anxiety of grief is an experience of separation from or loss of a significant other, perceived as a threat to the life and integrity of the self.

It was shown that other emotions which have been observed and discussed in relation to grief, depression, guilt, and hostility, rather than simply accompanying grief, are much more integrally involved in it. Guilt itself is separation anxiety, and hostility is a universal response to another in an intimate emotional relationship, an affect productive of guilt. Depression is a not infrequent

reaction to intense anxiety, and is therefore to be understood in grief as a common response to the painful affect of the threat of separation by the also painful turning of hostility inward upon the self.

What is termed existential anxiety by some philosophers and theologians, as well as some psychologists and psychotherapists, was also defined in terms of separation anxiety. This was relevant because of the observation that questions concerning the meaning of one's existence and the fear of one's own death were elements of the grief reaction.

II. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

It would seem as if psychology has actually been remiss in its failure to give its attention and apply its methodology to the human affective reaction of grief. This present work has sought to emphasize this fact and to present an approach to grief upon which hypotheses for research may be based. Positing anxiety as the major affective element of grief provides a starting point in operational terms already current in psychology and for which instruments of measurement have already been designed and validated. At least here is something to work with. It might be, of course, that hypotheses based on this definition would not be supported by research results. If that

were the case, data would still have been accumulated and analyses of these data might reveal the terms of other hypotheses. There is no question but what there is a need for sophisticated and imaginative psychological experimentalists to give effort to this area of human behavior.

It is to be noted that a major difficulty in the psychological investigation of grief is that of the sensitivity of the situation itself. Because of a basic human concern for the privacy of the feelings of others at the time of and immediately following the death of a person to whom they were emotionally related, investigators have hesitated to move in with a battery of tests, questionnaires, movie cameras, and tape recorders.

This does not mean that no one observes the grieving individual or that he cannot or does not communicate with anyone else. It is simply to recognize that those who are most likely to be present will also be to some degree emotionally involved in the situation, and this is true also of the minister and the physician, although one might hope that these two professions might be helpful coworkers in research in this area and that they might be the most reliable sources of the greatest amount of material. The exception to this would be, of course, the grieving person himself. The difficulty remains, however, that this is not the time that we try to get people to perform in experiments. Yet it would seem possible within a short time

after the death to approach the bereaved person in a straight-forward manner, explain the need to understand grief, and seek his cooperation in sharing his feelings and reactions as completely and honestly as possible.

This procedure would not be without its many inadequacies. It is not a controlled situation. There is not the direct observation of the person at the time of the most intense expression of feeling. There are emotional barriers to be considered. But it is not inconceivable that with the proper introduction, sensitivity to the person, and honest approach, persons still undergoing grief would cooperate with reasonable requests which would contribute to a body of knowledge concerning the reaction. Certainly they do other things in response to many people's requests which are less reasonable and relevant.

Suggested Empirical Procedures

A number of possibilities suggest themselves immediately. First, the bereaved could from the first record their own feelings and thoughts in writing. The analyzing of a sufficient number of these could provide the basis for a sentence completion test which could be scored in terms of separation-anxiety responses. Non-bereaved subjects could be differentiated as to level of anxiety by other validated instruments, such as the Taylor Manifest

Anxiety Scale,¹ the Bendig short form of the MAS,² the Lack of Protection Scale (LPS),³ or some other. Bendig would seem to be preferable to Taylor because it eliminates three of the fifty MAS items as being of low internal consistency and validity, thereby producing an instrument with about the same reliability but which is taken in a much shorter period of time.⁴ The Lack of Protection Scale would seem to lend itself admirably to the studies suggested here because it has been written in terms based on a definition of anxiety as response to a danger situation of the remembered and anticipated situation of helplessness which arose originally in the situation of separation from the mother,⁵ the terms upon which this present work is based.

The sentence completion instrument could be administered to the differentiated groups to determine whether the responses of the bereaved make the same anxiety differenti-

¹Janet Taylor, "A Personality Scale for Manifest Anxiety," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XLVIII (1953), 285-90.

²A. W. Bendig, "The Development of a Short Form of the Manifest Anxiety Scale," Journal of Consulting Psychology, XX (1956), 384.

³Irwin G. Sarason, "Interrelationships among Individual Difference Variables, Behavior in Psychotherapy, and Verbal Conditioning," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, LVI (1958), 339-44.

⁴Bendig, op. cit., p. 384.

⁵Sarason, op. cit., p. 340.

ation between them and the non-bereaved as do already validated scales. In this way it is possible to make some judgment as to whether the same psychological phenomenon is being investigated.

Assuming at this point that results are positive, a hypothesis could be stated that subjects in the situation of bereavement demonstrate more anxiety responses (higher anxiety scores) than (1) a control group of non-bereaved subjects, both randomly selected or in matched pairs, and (2) the same subjects after grief work has been accomplished. The hypothesis gives the method. Inventories used would be Bendig (for a clinical picture of anxiety), the LPS (for anxiety in separation terms), and the sentence completion (for a projective technique). These instruments would be administered to persons experiencing grief as soon as possible after bereavement occurs. This time might well vary, but to the extent that it could be kept within the first week the more revealing the results should be. The instruments would also be given to either a randomly selected group of subjects or, perhaps preferably, to matched pairs. Finally, the same scale or scales shown to be comparable on the basis of correlation studies could be administered to the experimental group no sooner than six weeks following the death of the emotionally related person.

Analyses of variance would then be compiled between the total experimental and control groups and between the

two testings of the experimental group. Further analyses might be made on the basis of age and sex and other factors judged to be relevant by the experimenter. Results should sustain or fail to sustain the hypothesis that the reaction of grief can be quantified in terms of anxiety scales, and therefore whether or not the proposition that anxiety is the determinative dynamic element in grief seems to be a valid one.

III. RELEVANCE FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY AND PASTORAL CARE

In discussing the relevance of the theory that grief involves acute anxiety whose basic force is separation fear and that it is best understood in terms of an interpersonal theory of the self, it is not assumed that something new in therapeutic or pastoral technique will be contributed. Rather, it is hoped that new understandings or different interpretations might clarify the meaning of the interpersonal relationship and the intrapsychic processes involved. Grief work must always be viewed in the light of the meaning which personal relationship has for the sustaining of the life and integrity of the self.

Anxiety as Motivation for Change

The first thing to realize then is that within the situation of grief-anxiety itself there are positive

affective forces at work. Whitaker and Malone perceive the positive aspect of anxiety in psychotherapy and see it as occurring

in an individual who finds himself in an interpersonal relationship within the matrix of which he perceives the possibility of better organizing his affect (growing). In these instances, new and unorganized affect becomes mobilized for growth.⁶

In other words, the anxiety which is always experienced when one is confronted with his own potentiality, the outcome of which is uncertain and is thus a threat to the level of security which one has already attained, becomes the stimulus to move from one's present internal situation. This anxiety propels toward personal growth, the integration of new experiences, feelings, and meanings into self concept, thereby strengthening and enlarging one's self. Such positive anxiety is "commensurate with (the individual's) intuition of the potential depth of the interpersonal relationship with a particular (person)."⁷ With this understanding of the positive aspects of anxiety, it is clear that it not only plays a significant role in the process of therapy but in all interpersonal situations. This needs to be emphasized in regard to grief, because in actual fact people do not normally go to a psychotherapist

⁶Carl Whitaker and Thomas Malone, "Anxiety and Psychotherapy," Identity and Anxiety, Maurice Stein, et al., eds. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), p. 168.

⁷Ibid., p. 169.

in their mourning and many do not even have the potentially helpful relationship with a clergyman. In these cases, grief work needs must be met by other members of the family and friends.

That others have seen "constructive aspects of anxiety" is demonstrated in a number of writings. Although some within the field of psychology and psychotherapy would not accept the language with which the idea is communicated, one should not overlook the insights of these views. Kierkegaard expressed it: "...only the man who has gone through the dread of possibility is educated to have no dread."⁸ Only the person who has looked with fear into the abyss of the nothingness can rise above that which is truly anxiety producing in life. Anxiety is the teacher that enters into one's life, "searches it thoroughly," and pushes toward the rooting out of the insignificant and the trivial.⁹ "Then when the individual is by possibility educated to faith, dread will eradicate what it has itself produced."¹⁰ Through anxiety a person learns that his security is not in the finite and the transient, and therefore may become capable of moving beyond dependence on these things. This movement is brought about by what

⁸Søren Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 141.

⁹Ibid., p. 142. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 143.

Kierkegaard terms "faith," which in its dynamics are those dynamics of trust and security in meaningful relation with another.

Berthold differentiates between neurotic and creative anxiety, and assumes that one differentiating factor is the intensity, the creative aspect of anxiety disappearing when a certain high intensity is reached.¹¹ Anxiety is seen as being the "child of love" and "the mother of the drive to know."¹² This does not deny morbid elements and possibilities, but it is to affirm that there are also creative and constructive roles which anxiety can play. Berthold builds upon, but goes beyond to interpret, Kirkegaard's ideas. The Biblical story of Adam and Eve is utilized to demonstrate man's guilt-anxiety as they sought to hide from God. What they feared was punishment, and the greatest punishment to be feared, picking up Freud's clue, is that of separation from the loved object. Therefore, Berthold judges, "Fear of separation implies the positive impulse of tenderness, love, longing about the loss of which one is anxious."¹³ He recognized the criticism of his own position in that the positive impulse may not be a mature object love, and perhaps, this writer feels,

¹¹Fred Berthold, "Anxious Longing," Constructive Aspects of Anxiety, Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger, eds. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 70.

¹²Ibid., p. 71. ¹³Ibid., p. 79.

not deserving of terms such as tenderness and love without some qualification, but the point is that when one feels anxiety, it is an anxious longing, a striving, thus a drive to seek some condition other than that one is in. This anxious striving can be utilized for therapy in any anxiety state, including grief. Although there may in instances be fear of relationship, the underlying drive is desire for relationship. The openness, warmth, understanding and congruence of the therapist can be the means of reducing the fear and breaking the barrier blocking the constructive force of anxiety.

Talking and the Needs of the Bereaved

Talking is a fundamental element in the relational communication of psychotherapy and pastoral care. Something of its meaning for the situation of the grief sufferer should be noted.

The concept of the development of the self and the integral affective relation of the learning of language which was presented in Chapter VI show how language in the infant and small child takes shape as essentially a security measure: first, as a necessary means of communicating basic survival and physical comfort needs; second, as a means of winning and maintaining parental approval; and third, even when the child is alone, as a means of holding the parents emotionally near. In other words, since

language is learned within the matrix of interpersonal relations within which anxiety as a painful affective response is also being learned, oral communication is among the first learned mechanisms of anxiety reduction. Language is a learned means of overcoming separation.

The relevance of this form of the interpersonal function of language has clear implications for grief. Numerous observers have noted a tendency of many grief sufferers to talk a great deal, especially about the deceased and personal relationships with the deceased.¹⁴ Various reasons for this talking have been given. When one reviews the needs of the bereaved as presented by the many writers on the topic, the role of speech as a primary method of expediting the processes involved can be seen.

Release of negative emotions. One need almost invariably mentioned is that of working through negative emotions such as hostility and hate and guilt. It is certainly not a new idea that encouraging a person to talk about his relationships with another until his words flow without inhibition, carrying with them the full expression of emotion, is a usual method by which such abreaction is accomplished. It is now merely better understood how words have come in the first place to assume such an affective charge

¹⁴Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (September, 1963), 10.

and that the speaking of the words becomes the expression of the self which speaks them. Speech becomes a substitute form of the emotionally charged acts that need to be performed, understood, and accepted.

Affirmation of one's self. A second need of the bereaved which relates to the first and which is not defined clearly by other writers is that of affirming positive attitudes toward oneself. In the midst of grief, separation fear, and its related components of hostility toward the deceased and guilt-anxiety, one common reaction is some form of self-punitive behavior. There are elements of depression, and not infrequently a lowered estimate of oneself. Sometimes it is observed that language is used to express the self-punishment in the form of self-accusation. But it is also possible to use language to reinforce positive attitudes toward oneself. Words become the means of reestablishing one's threatened and disrupted selfhood. Mowrer has elaborated the position that since words are learned in temporal contiguity with a relationship which provides at least a minimal protection and meeting of need, words take on almost immediately a secondary reinforcing value and become the instruments of reproducing such attitudes of love and protection toward oneself which were the attitudes of the ones in relation with whom the words were

first learned.¹⁵ Klein has indicated that upon the death of an emotionally related person, there is the feeling that the original introjected good objects have also been destroyed, so that the task which brings grief to a successful conclusion is not only the reinstatement of the loved object just lost, but also the bringing back to life within one's self these earlier good objects, the parents and their positive responses to the infant and small child.¹⁶ It has also been emphasized in this work that one common mechanism of defense against acute anxiety is that of regression and that regression may well bring with it the talking which seeks to hold the parents near. Therefore, it can be concluded that if speech for the small child is a method of keeping parents emotionally close, and if the task of mourning is to reproduce those early good objects which take the form within one's self of positive attitudes toward one's self, then talking is an available behavior which helps in the performance of this task. Words have value for the maintenance of the self.

Breaking libidinal ties. A third need as stated by almost all the writers is that of freeing one's self from

¹⁵O. H. Mowrer, Learning Theory and Personality Dynamics (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), pp. 708-09.

¹⁶Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXI (1940), 125-53.

bondage to the deceased, breaking the ties, the removing of libido from the lost loved object. Lindemann points to the communication of remembered experiences with the dead person as being involved in the process of the necessary emotional break. He is speaking of this verbalizing as being the emotional equivalent of reliving the experiences.¹⁷ Weiss has also referred to the process of breaking libidinal ties by concentrating on every object and situation associated with the deceased until one by one the bereaved is emotionally freed from them.¹⁸ This concept is not without its validity. Surely there is emotion which has been directed outward to the other and energy used in the affective relationship which must be withdrawn from that person by the sheer fact of physical absence, genuine object loss, and which will need to be expended in some other manner. It is also clearly demonstrated in psychotherapy that language is affective and relational in its very nature, since processes referred to as abreaction and catharsis are the verbal reliving of emotional experiences and relations with others.

¹⁷Lloyd E. Foster, "Grief," Pastoral Psychology, 1 (1950), 10.

¹⁸Edoardo Weiss, Principles of Psychodynamics (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1950), p. 11.

The resurrection of the deceased within the self of the bereaved. Less frequently mentioned than the need to accept the reality of the death of the other and to withdraw libido from the lost object is the even more pressing need to reaffirm the life of the deceased within one's own self. To the extent that persons have been emotionally involved with one another, making an affective investment in one another, to that degree they have made identifications of their lives. One's self has certain aspects of the life of the significant other as a living component of the self. When the other dies, the self is perceived as threatened with death by the loss of the other. But the external event of the death of an emotionally significant other need not annihilate the self. Rather, the other which is within one can be reaffirmed as living as a part of one's self.

The first response, as noted by a number of observers, is undoubtedly the perception of threat of death to one's own self and the protective mechanism of the denial of the reality of the death of the other. The first verbalizing may be seen as the regressive tendency to continue to hold the other near, to recapture his presence through words. But usually the process moves on to the revival of the life of the other within the self. This emphasis is made by several writers in contrast with the withdrawal of libido theme made by Freud and others. Abraham speaks of reaction to object loss by setting up the object within

one's own ego through introjection. The psychological result is, "my loved object is not gone, for I now carry it within myself and can never lose it."¹⁹ In this way the interpersonal relationship is maintained even though the other be dead.²⁰ Klein, too, speaks of the preservation of the loved object, the necessity in mourning of reestablishing the loved person as an active force in the ego of the bereaved, along with all of the good objects which he felt he had lost.²¹

Oates has given sensitive expression to what takes place within the self in the first perceptions following the death of a significant other on through the process of mourning. He refers to the psychological "death, burial and resurrection of ... self-hood in the process of grief"²² For when the introjected other is understood to be alive within the self, the self becomes whole, and fully alive, again. The language which has been the communicative link with the other, in being heard by the speaker himself, carries with it the emotional life of the relationship and reinforces the internalized presence of

¹⁹Karl Abraham, Selected Papers of Karl Abraham (New York: Basic Books, 1953), p. 437.

²⁰Ibid., p. 438.

²¹Melanie Klein, op. cit., pp. 143, 154.

²²Wayne Oates, Anxiety in Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), p. 54.

the other.

Renewal of relationship. The fifth need of the bereaved, and again one which is named by almost every writer who discusses grief work, is to cultivate other personal relationships, to renew and deepen other old relations and to establish new ones. Klein suggests that the mourner is strengthened against the threat to his inner life by contemporary relationships with people he loves and trusts, who share his grief, and in the midst of whose care "the restoration of the harmony of his inner world is promoted, his fears and distress are more quickly reduced."²³ This follows logically, since the major dynamic of grief has been defined in terms of separation anxiety. It is the fear of self loss which was learned parataxically with separation from the significant other which needs to be dealt with. Engels, as a psychosomatic specialist, follows up this insight with a suggestion to the medical team for treatment. If grief is reaction to an object loss, then the maintenance and replacements of objects ("persons in relation") must be considered an important factor in the healing process. Therefore, the medical team itself should not be reluctant to enter into the life of the grief-stricken in a personal way, entering into relation with him,

²³Klein, op. cit., p. 145.

becoming for him a significant object.²⁴ Schnitzer has observed that even though "friends may have nothing to say, their very presence with the bereaved when he feels that the world is empty and void, has its remedial effects."²⁵ Certainly this has been the traditional role of the minister as he maintains a personal contact with the bereaved during the entire mourning process. He is to be present to and for the other.

What all of this is saying is that the answer to the anxiety of grief (separation) is love (union). The Bible states it: "Perfect love banishes fear."²⁶ Fromm has offered productive love, union, as the only final remedy for the major source of man's ailments, separation.²⁷ But communion cannot be conceived of apart from communication. Although there are many forms of non-verbal communication, and even the presence alone of certain persons at the time of grief-anxiety is its own powerful communication, the powerful affective content of words must not be forgotten.

²⁴George L. Engels, "Is Grief a Disease?" Psycho-somatic Medicine, XXIII (1961), 22.

²⁵Jeshaia Schnitzer, "Thoughts on Bereavement and Grief," Reconstructionist, CXXXI (1955), 12.

²⁶I John 4:18 (New English Bible).

²⁷Erich Fromm, Man for Himself (New York: Rinehart, 1947), pp. 97-98.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is inevitable that those who reach adulthood will at some time experience the death of someone with whom they are closely related emotionally. It would be wise to prepare for this event. Understanding that separation anxiety is the major affective element in grief would expedite this preparation by pointing out to one the personal needs which such anxiety reflects. Present close relationships can be examined and their ambivalences brought to light and kept in the open. Hostility and guilt can be worked through, and where needed, forgiveness can be given and received and reconciliation sought. Immature dependence, where it exists, can be recognized for what it is, and the relationship can be reformed on a more mature level. Those other relationships which a person would probably call upon and gain sustenance from at the time of grief could be more meaningfully cultivated in the present.

Likewise, the therapist is aided by understanding grief in terms of the clinical picture of anxiety, something with which he is already familiar. The meaning of verbal forms of communication as a means of working through the anxiety of grief is clarified for him. The therapeutic relational needs are the same as for any person experiencing separation anxiety.

The role of the minister in the grief situation is that of therapist. However, there are, it seems to this writer, at least three ways in which he could be even more effective for many people than the non-clerical therapist, if he understands and performs his role. First, in many instances, his own personal relationship with the grief sufferer has already been established, and communication should more easily and quickly take place. Second, his very presence in the situation of grief is a powerful symbol communicating the loving concern, not just of an individual, but of a whole community of persons, at least frequently a community which the bereaved already knows and within which he finds a source of his own identity. Third, his presence and his words and activities convey a tradition which has within it the proclamation of hope and new life and which presents certain structures through which grief may be expressed.

Further investigation of the dynamics of grief based upon the hypothesis that they are primarily those of separation anxiety are to be encouraged in order that empirical data can contribute to our understanding of this affect which so powerfully controls one's life when it comes.

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